

No peace without Israeli handover of West Bank, Arafat aide stresses

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians insisted Saturday there would be "no peace or security" unless Israel ends its occupation of the entire West Bank, after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the territory was part of Israel.

"There will be no peace and no security for anyone without a withdrawal from the entire West Bank and all the lands which Israel occupied in 1967, including east Jerusalem," said Nabil Abu Rudeina, a senior aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Netanyahu's statements are a "new attempt to wreck the peace process" which "exposes the entire region to great danger," Mr. Abu Rudeina said on his return to Gaza City with President Arafat from Cairo.

In Egypt earlier, Mr. Arafat said the Palestinians were determined to wrest the West Bank from "the claws of Israeli occupation."

On Friday, Mr. Netanyahu said the West Bank was part of "Israel proper," fanning tensions at a time when the peace process is focusing on how much of the territory

Israel intends to hand over to Palestinian rule.

Mr. Netanyahu's media adviser, David Bar-Ilan, said the prime minister did not mean that the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, is legally part of the Jewish state.

"It is a fact that it does not belong to the state of Israel, this is a fact. But he meant that it was part of Erez Israel," he told AFP.

"Erez Israel" or Greater Israel is a religious and historic term used by Jews to refer to the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, which religious nationalists in Israel feel it should also be the boundaries of the state itself.

"There is no body of water separating the West Bank from Israel proper. It is part of Israel proper," Mr. Netanyahu told a press conference Friday. "It is our backyard. It is not foreign land to us."

Meanwhile, Mr. Abu Rudeina said President Arafat will ask U.S. President Bill Clinton to pressure Israel to go ahead with a promised troop withdrawal in the West Bank when the two leaders meet in January.

Hamas leader repeats truce offer

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The spiritual leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Saturday repeated his offer of a truce with Israel, saying the liberation of "all Palestine" would have to wait for future generations.

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin told Israeli television that Hamas was prepared to offer a "ceasefire" if Israel retreated from lands it occupied in 1967.

Sheikh Yassin said he was sorry Israel had rejected the offer, which he has made in the past, accusing the Israeli government of "wanting both peace and territory."

When asked about Hamas calls for the destruction of Israel, Sheikh Yassin said

establishing a Palestinian state in all of Israel and the territories was a "long-term" goal.

"The liberation of all of Palestine can only be the work of future generations," he said.

Israel released Sheikh Yassin from prison in October after he had served eight years of a life sentence in order to win the release of two Israeli intelligence agents caught by Jordan trying to assassinate a Hamas official in Amman.

He has since repeatedly offered a truce with Israel if it ends its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and removes settlements, conditions which Israel has refused.

"Simple efforts are not enough. We are asking the United States to take an active role in pressuring Israel. This is what we expect from the talks between Arafat and Clinton," he said.

But he said the Palestinians did not expect Israel to come up with a concrete proposal for the withdrawal, which have raised a sharp debate within Mr. Netanyahu's fractious right-wing government.

"Israel has clearly postponed taking a decision on the withdrawals for another

month," he said. "So January will be a month of waiting to see whether Israel will continue to defy international law and refuse to implement our agreements," he said.

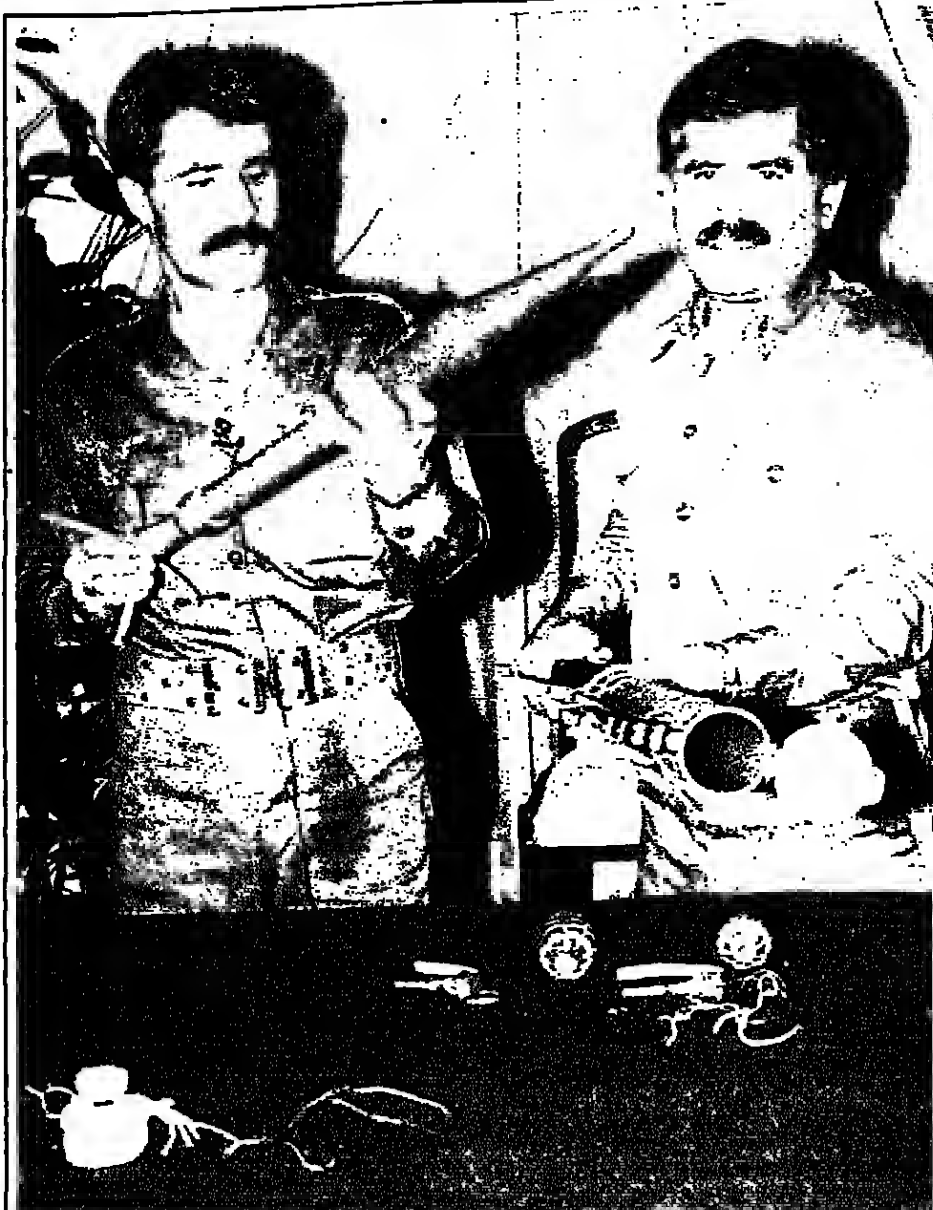
In Damascus, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) demanded that the Palestinians stop negotiating with Israel after Mr. Netanyahu said the West Bank is part of "Israel proper."

"There is no reason to continue negotiations with Israel which only serve the

Israeli government and which are aimed at deceiving international public opinion," PFLP spokesman Maher Taher said in a statement.

The Damascus-based PFLP, one of the three main components of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), rejects peace accords with Israel.

Mr. Taher also called for the PLO to "respond to Netanyahu's policy and demand an Arab summit to draw up a strategy for confronting Israel's aggressive policy."



INSPECTING SEIZED WEAPONS: Two members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahideen Khalq on Saturday inspect rockets and other weapons seized from assailants who attacked the group's headquarters in Baghdad. Mujahideen leader Massoud Rajavi said the attack showed that the Iranian regime is again resorting to terrorist attacks only a week after the Islamic summit in Tehran (Reuters photo)

Organ donations from brain dead persons still not accepted despite assurances

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians are not yet ready to accept the concept of brain death, a vital source for organ donation and relatively easier transplant operations that could help save the lives of hundreds of needy patients, officials and doctors have said.

Ten years ago, Jordanian law legalised brain death as a state in which the heart continues to beat but must rely on life sustaining machines. However, despite religious, medical, and legal assurances, a controversy continues to cloud donations from brain dead people.

"Social factors play a major role in organ donation, as we are very emotional people and cling to the belief that a brain dead patient might still have a chance despite medical advice to the contrary," Izdiad Badran, head of the department of anaesthesiology and intensive care at the Jordan University Hospital, told the Jordan Times.

"People in Jordan are

culturally not ready to accept the fact that a brain dead patient is really dead because as soon as the machines are switched off the heart stops," she said at the sidelines of a recent conference on organ donation.

Only two per cent of organ donations in Jordan come from brain dead donors, while 98 per cent are from live donors, according to official figures. This contrasts sharply with European practices, where 95 per cent of donated organs are from brain dead people.

Khalid Muhalwas, head of the Speciality Hospital, said most organs could be easily transplanted from brain dead persons because the body is still alive. However, only the corneas, and in special cases the kidneys, could be transplanted from a dead donor.

The controversy surrounding brain dead organ donations was highlighted by the sudden death of William Akroush, 17.

At his parents' request, William's kidneys went

to a young girl in the West Bank city of Nablus and to a young man in the Jordanian city of Salt. His heart and lungs saved the life of a young girl from the Jordan Valley in the first such surgery in the Middle East while his corneas returned the eyesight of two Jordanians.

"We wanted to see our son live on through others," said Adeb Akroush, father of the deceased. "Every human being who is able to donate his or her organs should do so. Why should not others make use of something our son no longer needed?"

"Donations were made to those in need with no discrimination regarding sex, religion, colour, or ethnic affiliation," Mr. Akroush said.

Islam, the state religion, encourages organ donations. "Islam is in favour of organ transplants with no restrictions regarding sex, religion, colour, or ethnic background," Hamdi Murad, assistant director general at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, explained.

"Islam is about giving

and organ donation is considered a great honour for the donor and his family," he added.

However, Dr. Murad said the only condition Islam puts on organ transplants is that the donation should not be the cause of death of the donor.

Lawyer Ahmad Jamal said organ donation was legal under Jordanian law, provided it is not done for financial gain.

"The donor has to give her or his written consent for the organ donation and simultaneously has to be in charge of her/his mental faculties," he said.

Medical experts have said the government is spending around JD6.5 million a year on 700 kidney patients — around half of Jordan's total kidney patients.

Participants at the seminar called for the creation of a national organisation to supervise organ donations and to document information on potential donors and those who have donated body parts. They said it should recruit social workers to convince relatives of a brain dead person to give his/her organs.

Jumblatt meets Israeli Arab MP in Damascus

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Lebanese government minister travelled to Damascus Friday to meet an Israeli Arab MP who had earlier been denied entry to take part in a conference in Beirut.

Minister for Displaced People Walid Jumblatt made the trip specifically for the meeting with Azmi Bishara, a member of an Israeli communist opposition party, his mainly-Druze Progressive Socialist Party said. The two men discussed "the situation in the autonomous Palestinian territories as well as the faltering peace process," party officials said.

Mr. Bishara had been due to take part in a conference on "Globalisation and the Arab World" in Beirut Thursday organised by the Institute of Arab Unity Studies headed by Khairuddin Hassib, a former Iraqi government minister and U.N. official.

But he was denied entry to Lebanon from Syria Wednesday at the insistence of the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, the leader of the Shiite militant Amal movement, Nabih Berri, as he had no visa, the institute said.

Syria: Peace with Israel impossible with Netanyahu as prime minister

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Peace with Israel is impossible so long as hardliner Benjamin Netanyahu remains its prime minister, Syrian state radio said Saturday.

"Israel is behind the failure of the peace efforts of the international community and particularly of the United States," the radio said in its daily political commentary.

"The world is now convinced that the peace process has entered into a tunnel since the arrival of Benjamin Netanyahu in power and that

nobody can get it out of the tunnel as long as he remains in power," it said.

"The government of [Netanyahu's right-wing] Likud is interested solely in the continuation of the occupation [of Arab lands] and the expansion of [Jewish] settlements."

The current Israeli government also went to peace talks "empty-handed and has never put forward a practical proposal to advance peace," the radio said.

On Friday Mr. Netanyahu drew European fire and U.S.

criticism by insisting that the West Bank occupied by Israel since 1967 was part of "Israel proper."

The Israeli leader also vowed to fight U.S. pressure to make "significant and credible" troops withdrawals from the territory to help break the nine-month deadlock in peace talks. His remarks threatened to derail the latest U.S. efforts to break the deadlock and cast doubt on separate meeting due next month between U.S. President Bill Clinton, Mr. Netanyahu and President Yasser Arafat.

Ramadan fears grow in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Fears of a Ramadan bloodbath grew in Algeria on Saturday after three fresh massacres and two bomb blasts in which at least 47 people were killed.

In the most serious incident, 31 inhabitants of Djiboula, on the outskirts of Larbaa city, south of Algiers, were slain in an hour-long attack overnight Thursday, several newspapers in the capital reported.

Even babies were murdered as the attackers took the lives of eight men, 10 women and 13 children — either slitting their throats and burning them

alive in their homes.

Ten others were wounded, and two young women kidnapped, according to the reports. Combined with other attacks on the same night and two bomb blasts in Blida on Friday, the massacre was the worst since one at Bentata, near Algiers, on Sept. 22 in which more than 250 people died.

It also preceded the Dec. 31 start of Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting, a time when extremists are known to intensify their attacks in an insurgency that goes back to 1992.

At Ramadan last year, the capital was subjected to car-bomb attacks that killed dozens and injured hundreds.

Amnesty International estimates that 80,000 people have died violently in Algeria since 1992, when the military blocked an election that the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

President Liamine Zennou's regime, while pressing on with painful economic reforms, has this year tried to open a dialogue with the FIS leadership, while battling more militant Islamist elements.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10The Pink Panther
14:30Jonny Quest
15:00Energy Express
15:30American Chart Show
16:30Tarzan
17:00French Programmes
19:00News in French
19:30News Headlines
19:35Kate and Allie
20:00Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30Doc. — Renegade
21:10Renegade
22:00News in English
22:30North and South
23:15The Jewel in the Crown

PRAYER TIMES

05:04Fajr
06:27(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:34Dhuhr
12:18Asr
16:40Maghrib
18:03Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min/Max. temp.

Amman01/14
Aqaba08/140
Deserts1/15
Jordan Valley08/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 12, Aqaba 18 Humidity
readings: Amman 59 per cent,
Aqaba 45 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah830425
Dr. Munther Al Qatani779999
Dr. Wissam Hazyen748563
Dr. Khalid Abdo657129
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asma pharmacy637055
Naioukh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najih pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh250080
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Saffarini987565
Khalifeh pharmacy98541

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Dept.630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water & Sewage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
J. Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Co.636381
RJ Flight Information08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre813813/82

Khalidi Maternity644281/6
Akhil Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali666164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Gvt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa Natinal Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05Lamaca (RJ)
08:25Bombay (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
09:15Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
15:15Brussels (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05Paris (RJ)
17:35Madrid, Milan (RJ)
17:45London (RJ)
18:05Athens (RJ)
18:40Frankfurt (RJ)
19:40Rome (RJ)

Other Flights

03:25Rome (AZ)
10:00Sanaa (YV)
11:00Riyadh (add) (SV)
12:25Bahrain (GF)
13:00Moscow (SU)
15:00Doha (QR)
17:45Jeddah (SV)
20:00Tel Aviv (LY)
20:10Beirut (ME)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:10Istanbul (TK)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
08:40Frankfurt (RJ)
09:30Cairo, Madrid (RJ)
11:15Rome (RJ)
11:30Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:20Athens (RJ)
12:30Vienna (RJ)
20:15New Delhi (RJ)
20:40Damascus (RJ)
20:50Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:30Bangkok (RJ)
22:35Cairo (RJ)
23:00Sanaa (SU)
23:59Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
02:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

03:00Athens (OA)
04:20Rome (AZ)
06:15Beirut (ME)
06:40Beirut, London (BA)
07:50London (BA)
11:00Sanaa (YV)
13:15Doha (QR)
14:50Moscow (SU)
16:00Doha (QR)
19:15Jeddah (SV)
21:20Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15Aqaba (RW)
09:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50Aqaba (RW)

Princess Basma honours founding members of women's forum

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma Saturday honoured the 13 founding women members of the Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFW) at a ceremony marking the JNFW's third anniversary.

In her address, the Princess urged the forum members to pursue their efforts to enable Jordanian women to raise their standard in society, contribute to the country's socio-economic development, and assist women to better serve their families and their communities.

Stating that the initial efforts by women's groups were difficult due to the many obstacles they faced, the Princess said she was confident that qualified

and competent Jordanian women would be able to lead their colleagues forward.

JNFW Secretary General May Abul Samen told the meeting, which was attended by a number of Parliament and JNFW members, that thousands of women are now participating in JNFW activities, demonstrating their readiness for development.

The JNFW has organised a series of seminars and workshops to orient women on skills needed to enhance the development process and become productive, she said.

Training courses benefiting women in rural, badia, and urban regions were held and three legal con-

sultation bureaux were opened in Zarqa, Mafrqa, and Karak to provide women with free legal counsel.

The JNFW is currently implementing two major health projects in the Jafr and Koura districts and has started collective projects for local women in Ajloun, Deir Allah, and Shobak. The forum has also opened 12 adult literacy centres, according to Mrs. Abul Samen.

Princess Basma had earlier inspected progress on the training workshop organised by the JNFW for female members of municipalities. The programmes are designed to promote working women's skills and performance.

Syrian charged with murder alleges he planned to abduct family for ransom

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The alleged killer of a Syrian family of three told the Criminal Court Saturday that he and three other men had originally planned to abduct the family for ransom.

The testimony of Faieh Jilasi, the defendant, marked a turning point in his two-month trial for the murder of Jamal Abdo, 38, his wife Manal Othman, 35, and their two-year-old son Khalid, on June 17, 1997.

He reportedly confessed to the authorities 48 hours after the discovery of the

bodies that he drugged the family and killed them in revenge for a financial dispute with Mr. Abdo's father.

During a 30-minute cross-examination, the 35-year-old defendant alleged for the first time that he was forced into a plan by three other debtors to drug the family, abduct them, and ask for a ransom from Mr. Abdo's father.

On the eve of the incident, he said he took six valium pills to calm his nerves and headed to the couple's apartment with orange juice mixed with drugs. The three other persons waited outside.

After spending two

hours with the family, he maintained that Ms. Othman and her son fell asleep, while the husband remained awake because he refused to drink the juice.

"When the three entered the apartment to abduct the family, they saw that Jamal was still awake, so one of the men stabbed him with a knife," he claimed.

"When I saw this scene, I fainted and fell on the floor. Then another person went inside and stabbed Manal while she was sleeping," the defendant told the court.

The three set the house ablaze and fled with the

child, he stated.

"I left the child with the three men for a while, and when I went to pick him up, I discovered that he was dead," he added.

The defendant said he has been suffering from depression and mental problems since 1978 and was still being treated.

"I am a bad-tempered person and cannot control my nerves," Mr. Jilasi told the court.

The bodies of the couple were found by Civil Defence Department rescue teams after they were called in to extinguish the fire in their apartment opposite the University of Jordan.

According to a prosecution charge sheet, the suspect travelled to the Kingdom on March 1 to kill the Syrian couple and abduct their child for ransom.

Three months later, the suspect visited the family and drugged them, stabbed the couple, set their house on fire, and fled with the child.

Mr. Jilasi later strangled the child, then buried him at a farm in Madaba, the charge sheet said.

The court tribunal, comprising of Justices Mohammad Ajarmeh, Mifteh Mubaidin, and Issa Hamdan, postponed the session to Dec. 22 to hear the defence witnesses.

Queen Alia Fund begins preparations for Ramadan charity programme

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) has begun preparations for the annual Ramadan Charity Campaign, which is due to start by the beginning of the month of Ramadan.

The annual campaign, which started in the month of Ramadan in 1991, is aimed at collecting funds and in-kind contributions for the needy to be distributed during the Holy Month, due to start this year on Dec. 28 or 29.

Thousands of school-children, boy scouts, and members of youth clubs, as well as QAF officials, will be involved in the month-long fund raising activities.

QAF President HRH Princess Basma, who initiated the campaign, has in the past participated in the distribution of food-stuffs, blankets, and other relief aid to needy families, mostly in the badia and rural regions.

The charity work takes the form of paying school fees for needy students,

funding vocational training programmes, buying equipment and livestock to help families earn a living, financing collective groups to start small businesses, buying wheel-chairs for the handicapped, and many other forms of assistance.

According to QAF sources, nearly JD1.3 million have been collected since 1991 through the annual Ramadan charity campaigns, benefiting more than 750,000 needy persons.

Five arrested for roles in student strike

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Security authorities have arrested five students for their alleged involvement in instigating a week-long strike last month to push for improved services at their college, relatives said Saturday.

The Amman Polytechnic Faculty students were being held at the General Intelligence Department.

A government official, who requested anonymity, said the five were being interrogated "for instigating protests at the faculty and the questioning will take some time."

Cabinet hears briefings on recent international conferences, approves Cairo embassy purchase

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mamser Saturday reported to the Council of Ministers on a meeting held in the Hague from Dec. 9-11 by experts on health and social development representing the European and Mediterranean regions.

Dr. Mamser, who represented Jordan, said he signed a memorandum with the Dutch health ministry paving the way for the training of Jordanian personnel in the Netherlands in providing care to handicapped children.

The Cabinet approved a

seminar by representatives of the two regions in 1999, he said.

The Cabinet meeting, which was chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, heard a briefing by Dr. Mamser on a conference held in Bonn from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 to discuss voluntary work in U.N. member nations.

A decision was made to hold a scientific seminar on voluntary work in Amman next April to be attended by delegates from Arab countries, he added.

The Cabinet approved a

recommendation by Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez to purchase a building in Cairo to serve as the Kingdom's embassy in Egypt.

The embassy building and the land on which it stands were estimated to cost JD2,307,500, which will be paid by the government through a loan to be obtained from the Social Security Corporation.

The Council of Ministers also approved an agreement on technical and economic cooperation between Jordan and China and decided to exempt

from customs duty all equipment and spare machinery parts that were bought from China by the Ministry of Agriculture through a Chinese government loan. The purchases include 15 water tanker trucks, 15 lorries, and other machinery.

The Council of Ministers formed Jordan's delegation to attend a meeting by Arab ministers of youth and sports due to be held in Cairo in February 1998. The delegation will be led by Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein.

Importance of water infrastructure investment highlighted at seminar

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — At a recent two-day seminar on the French experience in public-private partnership in urban services, officials emphasised the need for investment in water-services infrastructure in view of the increasing cost and scarcity of water.

The government's investment in the water sector accounts for one-third of the total expenditures of Jordan's five-year economic strategy, the Economic and Social Development Plan.

"The key issue and ultimate objective is to reduce the cost [of water] to the consumer," said Koussai Quteishat, secretary general of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

Mr. Quteishat spoke of Jordan's water strategy, which aims at acquiring and providing water at affordable prices.

Jordan pays the highest price for water among Arab states, with rates of over one dollar per cubic metre of water for residential use and over two dollars for non-residential use, such as in industry, according to experts.

When comparing the percentage of income spent by a Jordanian household on water to that of a household in the United States, the percentage of expenditure on water here is ten times

greater, said Mr. Quteishat.

He told the Jordan Times that this percentage is among the highest in the world.

Mr. Quteishat stressed that the concept of private participation implies flexibility and adaptation to local conditions and needs.

"We have been discussing the idea of a public shareholding company to generate funds for projects," he commented, adding that foreign investment would be a prerequisite due to the magnitude of these projects and the need for technical know-how.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has set itself two main priorities: to increase efficiency in services and to develop the capital for large infrastructure projects.

According to Mr. Quteishat, most of these projects are beyond the government's financial capacity and so attracting private investment is viewed as imperative.

Jordan's water strategy encourages the expansion of the role of the private sector "with the sharing of risks and responsibilities," he said. In this context, the first project of this nature, which has already been tendered, is the Amman Governorate management contract, which includes management, operation, and maintenance services related to the water and wastewater infrastructure and

associated administration.

Another project is a water transfer scheme from Disi to Amman on a build, operate and transfer basis. Mr. Quteishat said funding will come from the private and public sectors to ensure a reduction of cost.

French banking, engineering, and industry experts from the public and private sectors spoke of their experience in establishing partnerships between the private and public sectors in urban services.

Heading the French delegation were Bernard Birsinger, the mayor of the city of Bobigny, and Jean-Yves Perrot, the director of Economic and International Affairs at the French Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Housing.

The French model was commended in delegating the management of public services such as water management, energy, and transport. Mr. Perrot noted that in light of globalisation and the privatisation of state-owned companies, countries are now looking at means of creating an equilibrium between the private and public sectors.

A series of roundtables were also held, focusing on urban services, transport, and project financing.

This event was organised by the French Embassy and the French Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Housing.

Communist party to appoint chief by tomorrow

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian Communist Party (JCP) Saturday announced that its newly-elected Central Committee will appoint the party's new secretary


general today or tomorrow.

The 27-member JCP Central Committee, which includes five women, was elected Friday at the end of a three-day national congress.

Party sources Saturday said there were no official candidates for party chief.

Outgoing JCP Secretary General Yacoub Zayadhin, 76, has been at the head of

the party since 1987. In recent interviews, he said he preferred to step down in order to allow younger party members to reach leadership positions.



One more reason to celebrate

Imseeh Jewelry

exhibits the greatest selection of the finest jewelry in their new showroom - Um Uthaina.

Opens Today

Imseeh
Um Uthaina

Awarded the 22nd International Award for The Best Trade Name-1997
& The 11th. International European Award for Quality

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* Musical performance by the Trio of the National Music Conservatory (Timor Ibragimov, Ali Musa, and Tzonka Al Bakri) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Monday, Dec. 22, at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

* Paintings by Samia Zaru at Amman Bookshop, Jabal Amman, Third Circle, until Dec. 24.

* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

LECTURE

* "Jerusalem Since June 1967" (in Arabic) by Mr. Faisal Al Hussein at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Monday, Dec. 22, at 6:00 p.m.

Mbeki predicts ANC split with Communist Party, unions

JOHANNESBURG (AFP)

— South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who took the helm of the African National Congress earlier this week, predicted Friday a future split between the governing party and its Communist and trade union allies.

In a half-hour interview with state-owned SABC television, Mr. Mbeki said he could "foresee a day" when the ANC's main allies, the Marxist-based South African Communist Party and the militant COSATU labour federation, end their cooperative links.

The so-called tripartite alliance between the three movements arose in the early 1980s to fight the former white-minority regime, which gave way to Nelson Mandela's ANC-led government in historic 1994 all-race elections.

The country's apartheid rulers, in turn, used the ANC's Communist links, which it referred to as "rooi gevaar" (red danger), as justification for a "total

onslaught" of military might against the ANC and other liberation movements.

"The fundamental thing that brought everyone into the ANC was the goal that we must end the system of racial domination in the country, and we must fight for a non-racial democracy," Mr. Mbeki said.

He added that when racial equality has been achieved, the alliance will likely be disbanded.

"When this racial issue ceases to be such a dominant feature of South African life... yes, indeed I would imagine that people might very well say that what brought us all together into this broad church (movement) has been achieved," Mr. Mbeki said.

He declined however, to speculate when that split would occur.

"When would it be that as South Africans this great dominant issue of racial disparity... has gone?" Mr. Mbeki said. "It will come, it has to come. But when, I cannot be in a position to

tell."

The ANC fought its liberation struggle against the former apartheid regime with the aid of the militant, 1.5 million-member socialist-leaning COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) movement and the Communist Party.

Many top members of the current ANC government, including Pnsts and Telecommunications Minister Jay Naidoo (COSATU), Transport Minister Mac Maharaj (Communist Party) and Trade Minister Alec Erwin (Communist Party) were, or still are linked to the ANC's allies.

Observers say Mr. Mbeki, who is himself a former Communist Party supporter but now propounds market capitalist policies, is faced with the daunting challenge of appealing supporters from across the political spectrum.

Mr. Mbeki dismissed speculation that he could not "fill the shoes" of the outgoing Mandela, who since he stepped down as

ANC president on Tuesday has become an ordinary ANC member.

Mr. Mandela will keep the reins of government until elections in 1999, when he is expected to be succeeded by Mr. Mbeki.

"My own view about all of this (is) I think that to some extent we exaggerate the role of individuals," Mr. Mbeki said. "Nelson Mandela is a member of the African National Congress... I don't feel we are faced with an issue of change."

The ANC works as a "collective," he said adding: "Mandela has a personal style, a very good style. And I don't think there is any need to imitate it."

Mr. Mbeki said one of the biggest challenges facing the ANC was to eradicate poverty. He conceded his party needed to "be sure" to prevent "corruption from rising within the ranks of the ANC."

"I don't think we want a corrupt organisation to lead the transformation of the country," he said.



NATO Secretary General Javier Solana (right) shakes hands with Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavic as they meet for talks in Banja Luka (Reuters photo)

NATO head warns Bosnia warcrimes suspects

THE HAGUE (R) — NATO chief Javier Solana sent out a warning Friday to indicted Bosnian war criminals that they would be delivered to the International Tribunal in the Hague if they refused to give themselves up.

The stark warning during a visit by Mr. Solana to Bosnia came as a Bosnian Croat seized by NATO forces Thursday and brought to The Hague pleaded not guilty at the tribunal to charges of standing by while a subordinate raped a Muslim woman.

It also coincided with the tribunal ordering the immediate release of another Bosnian Croat, one of 10 indicted war criminals who gave themselves up in October following intense U.S. pressure on Zagreb, for lack of hard evidence.

"The obligation to turn in indicted war criminals is a political responsibility of the parties. If the parties do not collaborate with the International Tribunal SFOR will do their job like we did two days ago," Mr. Solana told reporters during a visit to Bosnia.

In a lightning night-time raid Dutch troops of the NATO-led Peacekeeping Force in Bosnia (SFOR) captured two Bosnian Croat war crimes suspects.

Vlatko Kupreskic, indicted for one of the most notorious massacres of the Muslim-Croat war that erupted in central Bosnia in 1993, was wounded in the operation.

Mr. Kupreskic, 39, is accused of taking part in a massacre of civilians, including women and chil-

dren at the village of Ahmici in April 1993. He is expected to appear before the tribunal as soon as he has recovered sufficiently from his injuries.

The other man Anto Furundzija pleaded not guilty to the tribunal Friday to charges linked to the "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims in central Bosnia in 1993.

The tribunal said Mr. Furundzija, 28, commanded a Bosnian Croat paramilitary unit known as "The Jokers" and failed to intervene when a prisoner was raped while he conducted an interrogation.

At the same time the tribunal also ordered the immediate release of another Bosnian Croat, Marinko Katava, after chief prosecutor Louise Arbour said charges against him and two other Croats should be dropped because of a lack of firm evidence.

A tribunal source said the other two suspects, Pero Skopljak and Ivan Santic, were also expected to be freed in a separate ruling later Friday.

Mr. Katava, Mr. Skopljak and Mr. Santic were among a group of 10 Bosnian Croats charged with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia who gave themselves up to the tribunal in October following intense U.S. diplomatic pressure on Croatia.

The action to snatch Mr. Furundzija and Mr. Kupreskic was the most dramatic involving suspected war criminals since British troops seized a Bosnian Serb and killed another in Prijedor in July.

Both actions came amid

international criticism that the NATO-led peace force was not doing enough to apprehend indicted war criminals, as was laid down in the 1995 Dayton peace accord that ended the 3 1/2-year Bosnia war.

"This action by SFOR stands as a warning to all those indicted for war crimes who are still at large that they too will be held accountable. They should take steps immediately to surrender themselves voluntarily," Mr. Solana said after the action.

Bosnia's most notorious indicted war criminals, former Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic and former army chief General Ratko Mladic are still at liberty in the Bosnian Serb Republic, heavily guarded by loyal militias.

The issue of handing over Mr. Karadzic is a highly sensitive one among the Serbs, and Western diplomats fear it could spark retaliation.

As of Dec. 18, 1997 the tribunal had publicly indicted 78 suspects — 57 Serbs, 18 Croats and three Muslims.

Two indicted have been convicted and sentenced and 20 more are in the tribunal's custody. Over 50 are still at large. One is being released for lack of evidence, and two others could follow him to freedom.

The latest snatch in Bosnia came just hours before U.S. President Bill Clinton announced an open-ended extension of the American troop presence in Bosnia.

Elite British police in corruption probe

LONDON (AFP) — Up to 30 officers in Scotland Yard's elite Flying Squad Division are being investigated by anti-corruption police after allegations by a former colleague arrested for drug dealing and burglary. British press reports said Saturday.

Members of the Flying Squad — a division which deals with armed robberies — are accused of drug dealing, robbery and destroying evidence in return for taking bribes.

Officers from the London Metropolitan Police's Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB2) carried out a search of the Flying Squad's premises in London's East End Friday.

The allegations were made by a serving Flying Squad detective, who along with two retired officers, was charged earlier this month with breaking into the home of a drug dealer and conspiring to supply cannabis worth 500,000 pounds (\$835,000).

The serving officer, who turned informer, has been moved to a safe house from prison. The Independent reported.

Earlier this month, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon appealed to MPs for tougher powers to remove a hard core of up to 250 corrupt officers from the force.

Indian teenager accuses principal of poison bid

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A teenager in the Indian capital was allegedly forced to drink poison after her teachers suspected her of cheating during a school exam, the Hindustan Times newspaper said Saturday.

The daily said the 13-year-old was rushed to hospital Friday and her stomach pumped out after she went home, complained of dizziness and then became delirious.

The alleged victim said the incident took place Friday morning.

"As I was writing my paper, some teachers approached me with two question papers and asked me to sign on them after writing that I had brought them from home," she said. She said she refused but "relented" when the teachers slapped and threatened her. She said she was then taken to the principal, who "took out a vial from a bag and poured it down my throat. I was then sent home without being allowed to finish my paper."

Police said they would launch an investigation after medical tests proved that the girl was given poison.

Balcony in Russian sport hall falls, injures dozens

MOSCOW (R) — Seventy-two people were injured when a balcony at a sports hall in Russia's northern city of Arkhangelsk collapsed during an aerobics contest, an Emergency Ministry spokeswoman said Saturday.

She said 50 people were in hospital, 13 of them in serious condition, as a result of the accident which took place late Friday.

She gave no reasons for the collapse.

Carlos battles details as evidence closes in

PARIS (AP) — The man known as Carlos the Jackal made a final plea Friday for his triple murder trial to be suspended so two witnesses could be found and said he doesn't expect to ever leave France alive.

Presiding Judge Yves Corneloup said he would rule Monday on defence lawyers' request to halt proceedings until three purported eyewitnesses, to the murders could be found and brought to France.

Prosecutors and families of the victims — two French intelligence agents and an informer — have called the move a stalling tactic.

Carlos, whose real name is Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, followed repeated appeals by his attorneys to put off the trial by saying he wanted "the truth to be known... not to save me but to denounce the scandal that has struck France."

"This is not a tactic," he added. Carlos, who faces a 30-year prison sentence, contends the killings were a setup by French authorities and Israeli Mossad agents aimed at snaring him.

Continuing his latest tirade against a system he claims has no right to judge him, Carlos said: "Carlos is a dead man. He is condemned to death. I want to die as a revolutionary. I will not leave France without an exchange of hostages. At that moment, I would be killed."

France has no death penalty. Also on the sixth day of the proceedings, a fingerprint expert painstakingly described Carlos's fingerprints found in the left bank apartment where he allegedly shot the three in 1975.

Officer Regis Gondal said the prints of the Palestinian militant were found on several drinking glasses in the dingy second apartment near the Sorbonne, some next to a whiskey bottle on a table and another in a bathroom.

Mr. Gondal said authorities found five traces of his finger-

prints, and that 12 fingerprint characteristics found on each of the traces corresponded to Carlos's fingerprints.

Mr. Gondal explained that in France, to officially confirm a fingerprint match, 12 corresponding characteristics are required.

Another clash between Carlos and the judge came as police ballistics expert Pierre Deloume analysed the bullets and shell casings at the scene. He said they came from a Czech-made automatic pistol.

During his testimony, the dapper Carlos, again dressed in white shirt and navy blazer with ascot, stood up with his red notebook and grilled Mr. Deloume. He showed an extensive knowledge of weaponry and angered Judge Corneloup by repeatedly arguing Mr. Deloume shouldn't throw out the possibility it was a Yugoslav pistol.

"You're sidetracking the truth" said the greying 48-year-old, waving his hands. Corneloup called an early lunch break, as he did the previous day during another clash.

Carlos is accused of killing the informer, Michel Moukharbat — a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to which Carlos belonged — and French agents Raymond Dous and Jean Donatini in a Left Bank apartment in 1975.

The agents were investigating Carlos's role in attacks on Israel's El Al airlines at Paris' Orly airport.

Once one of the world's most hunted guerrilla, Carlos carried out the 1975 seizure of OPEC oil ministers and was involved in the 1976 Palestinian hijacking of a French jetliner to Entebbe, Uganda, that ended with an Israeli commando raid.

The trial, which began last Friday, was expected to last one week but due to delays is now due to run through Tuesday.

Controversial Cambodia tycoon awarded honorary U.S. doctorate

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — A controversial Cambodian tycoon whose U.S. visa has been revoked over drug trafficking allegations received an honorary doctorate Saturday from a small American college.

Iowa Wesleyan College, which last year awarded similar degrees to powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen and Cabinet Minister Sok An, presented Teng Bunma, reputedly Cambodia's wealthiest individual, with a doctorate in business administration.

"Honorary degrees are given to people who serve and perform, not just people who talk," college President Robert Price said. "Our recipient today is an individual who has led by doing and not by saying."

"It is unfortunate that often those who do are criticised by those who do not," he said in an apparent reference to Teng Bunma's notoriety which has received worldwide attention.

The U.S. government has revoked Teng Bunma's visa, citing evidence that the businessman is involved in drug trafficking.

Questions have also been raised about his financial support for the Cambodian government and armed forces and claims that he helped pay for the military action in July in which Hun Sen effectively ousted co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Teng Bunma is chairman of the diversified Thai Boon Roong Co Ltd and also president of the Phnom Penh Chamber of Commerce. He has repeatedly denied involvement in the drug

trade and defended his donations to the government, while denying that his money went directly to support the troops fighting Ranariddh's soldiers.

He has not, however, taken issue with reports detailing his short temper.

Earlier this year, Teng Bunma made headlines when he shot out a tyre on a parked Royal Air Cambodge Boeing 737 during a fit of pique over poor service. He said later he had wanted to shoot out all the tyres but it was dark and he did not want to harm disembarking passengers.

Several months later, Teng Bunma brandished a gun on board a Kampuchea Airlines L-1011, demanding that the crew hold the flight for some of his friends who were late for the flight.

No legal action has ever been taken over either incident — both of which occurred at Phnom Penh's Pochentong International Airport — leading government critics to complain about apparent impunity for the rich and powerful.

Mr. Price, who awarded the degree citing Teng Bunma's public service and donations of rice and roads to the country, said after the ceremony he knew the college's new graduate was controversial but was unaware of specific incidents.

"It's not a problem," he said of Teng Bunma's colourful reputation. "When someone has done the things he has done and helped the people he has helped, he deserves it."

Iowa Wesleyan is a small college with about 800 students located in Mount Pleasant, Iowa in the American Midwest.

Move to ban open-air love sparks outrage in Indian capital

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A call by New Delhi's mayor to ban open-air displays of affection has fuelled outrage in the Indian capital and unfurling allusions to Iran, the Pioneer daily reported Saturday.

Mayor Shanmukha Arya's proposal that "holding hands, kissing and hugging in public" should be banned has raised the hackles of students, academics and even senior politicians.

Poet Badri Raina, a former

member of Delhi University's Executive Council, said Ms. Arya's proposal for legislation was ridiculous.

"This is cultural gimmickry and not a sensible approach. In history, many people have tried to legislate human emotions and have failed. This will meet the same fate."

A bureaucrat who asked to remain anonymous added: "Young people are now under great stress and love in the nineties is a little more physi-

cal. We can do little to turn the tide and certainly cannot become like Iran."

Ms. Arya is a member of the main opposition Hindu nationalist party which tried to ban steamy advertisements during its brief spell as India's ruler last year. She said love in the open went against Indian tradition.

"I normally do not seek such people out," she said. "But one cannot help seeing them around. Such imitation of

Western morals does not suit our Indian ethos."

A student from New Delhi's prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University said: "This will take the love out of our lives. Something as warm and affectionate as holding hands in public does not harm anyone's sensibilities."

Public displays of affection have been frowned on in traditional Indian society but the taboo has lessened over the years, especially in cities.



Protesters shout 'It's a political conspiracy' during a protest in front of Seoul Railway Station against a decision taken by President Kim Young-Sam and President-elect Kim Dae-Jung to release two jailed former presidents (AFP photo)

S. Korea rights group slams Chun, Roh amnesty

SEOUL (R) — A South Korean human rights group Saturday angrily criticised a government decision to free former presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo.

"The decision really provokes our anger. Why should laws exist if they fail to punish the most ugly criminals," said Lim Ki-Ran, a spokeswoman for Mingahyup, one of the country's best-known human rights groups.

President Kim Young-Sam

agreed with President-elect Kim Dae-Jung in a meeting Saturday to grant a special amnesty to the former presidents, who were jailed last year.

A presidential statement said the two would be freed Monday along with 23 associates jailed in connection with slush fund scandals, a 1979 coup, and an army massacre a year later in which at least 200 people died.

"The amnesty is a back-

ward step in our history and will not help heal national wounds inflicted by Chun and Roh," Ms. Lim said.

The human rights group also said there were still many prisoners of conscience jailed by the former presidents.

"So many people were imprisoned, tortured and murdered under Chun and Roh's military regimes. How dare the government think about freeing the two former presidents," Ms. Lim said.



Indonesian military officers guard the debris of the SilkAir Boeing 737-300 at the plane's crash site. The plane, carrying 104 people on board, crashed into the Musi River in south Sumatra province (Reuters photo)

Villagers saw Singapore plane plunge into river

SUKAMAJU, Indonesia (R) — Indonesian divers Saturday found a large chunk of a Singapore SilkAir jetliner, which some witnesses said exploded before crashing into a river in south Sumatra with the feared loss of all 104 people aboard.

The 10-month-old Boeing 737-300 plane crashed Friday into the Musi River and coastal mangrove swamps midway through a flight from Jakarta to Singapore.

Some witnesses said they heard an explosion before the plane plunged into the river, sinking several fishing boats with a large wave.

"We are still searching for victims but it seems very unlikely there will be survivors," said police Captain Hariadi at the fishing village of Sukamaju, overlooking the crash site where the Musi River is about one km wide.

Village head Yasin Rosip told Reuters: "We heard an explosion before the plane crashed and we found pieces of rudder in a rice field about two km from the river."

A rescue official at the South Sumatra provincial capital of Palembang, about 60 km south of Sukamaju, also quoted witnesses as saying there had been an explosion.

"Based on what witnesses said, we can confirm that the plane exploded in the air before it crashed," the official at Palembang airport said.

In Singapore, officials of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) said a large piece of wingtip and another of the

rudder had been found. Divers said they were having difficulty locating remnants of the plane as police launches used fishing nets to trawl for debris through the river, a deep chocolate colour.

"It's very dark down there. We can't see anything but we can touch things," said army diver Sergeant Erizal, speaking as two Puma helicopters clattered overhead.

The diver and police in the nearby coastal fishing town of Sungsang said some body parts had been found, but no survivors. Debris, including life jackets, pieces of metal and clothing,

"Our divers have found a major part of the plane stuck in the river. They are trying to open the doors but cannot because it is half buried in mud," a policeman in Sungsang said.

Sungsang and the crash site, about five km from the sea, are only accessible by wooden river boats from Palembang.

Police said tugs were expected to deliver a crane to the crash site after dark Saturday.

Clusters of small homes lie along the river, which runs through thick tropical vegetation and mangrove swamps to the sea.

Another witness, 60-year-old villager Damsyik, said he saw the plane spinning downwards as he mended his roof. "I heard a bang when the plane crashed into the water," he said.

The crash of SilkAir flight MI 185 was the first disaster to befall the company, or its parent firm Sin-

gapore Airlines.

Officials said the exact cause of the disaster was a mystery, but "black box" flight data recorders might provide some clues after they were found.

Senior Singapore officials said they were mystified by the crash of an almost new plane in apparently decent weather on a routine flight from Jakarta to Singapore, one of the region's busiest routes.

A CAAS spokesman said an investigation team from the United States, including representatives of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Boeing and the engine manufacturers were due in Palembang late Sunday.

Friday's crash was the second major air disaster in Indonesia in three months. A Garuda Indonesia Airbus A-300 went down near the North Sumatran city of Medan in September, killing all 234 people on board.

Sungsang is almost exactly halfway between Jakarta and Singapore, about 440 km northwest of the Indonesian capital and 400 km southeast of Singapore.

Flights from Jakarta to Singapore are usually at about 9,250 metres above sea-level while crossing the region.

SilkAir said the plane made no distress calls.

Aviation experts have said that despite recent plane disasters widely reported in the media, the number of crashes worldwide has remained fairly constant over the past 20 years.

But some unsolved incidents provide a nagging

reminder that it still possible for airliners to drop out of the sky for no apparent reason. And even with airline safety improving, the industry still fears the impact of crashes on public opinion.

According to Boeing, the world's biggest commercial plane maker, if air travel continues to grow at its current rate without even more safety improvements, there would be a major accident somewhere in the world every week by the year 2005.

Indonesia's air safety record this year has been poor.

Apart from the SilkAir and Garuda disasters, at least 30 people were killed when a Sempati Airlines Fokker F-27 crashed after take-off from the city of Bandung in West Java. At least 13 people died in two other crashes of planes owned by Merpati Airlines, another domestic Indonesian airline.

Singapore said 40 of its nationals were on the SilkAir plane along with 23 Indonesians, 10 Malaysians, five Americans, five French, four Germans, three British, two Japanese, one Austrian, one Australian, one Indian, one Taiwanese and one Bosnian.

The 41-year-old pilot, Tsu Way Ming with 6,900 hours flying experience, and the cabin crew were all Singaporeans. The New Zealand co-pilot, Duncan Maurice Ward, 23, joined the airline in September last year.

The plane was the newest on the airline's fleet, SilkAir officials said.

Ukrainian plane wreck, bodies found in Greece

KATERINI, Greece (R) — Greek commandos Saturday finally reached the wreck of a Ukrainian airliner with 70 people aboard that had crashed and burned up three days earlier at the foot of Mount Olympus.

The first team to reach the site reported that the only piece of the Russian-built Yakovlev-42 airliner that remained intact was the cockpit. There was no sign of any survivors.

The aircraft disintegrated upon impact and slid into a gorge. Deputy Defence Minister Dimitris Apostolakis told reporters at Salonika airport, where the plane had been headed. "There were bodies among the debris..."

"There was a fire upon impact, shown by the fact that some 70 hours later certain pieces of debris are still warm," he added.

The plane vanished late Wednesday but a search on foot by thousands of troops and civilians was hampered by deep snow and thick fog.

"If the cloud cover hadn't lifted we would not have found the crash site," Mr. Apostolakis said. "It is such a difficult site that the helicopter which first spotted it didn't want to leave, fearing it would not be able to find it again."

He said troops would now work non-stop until all the bodies were recovered. Convoys of army trucks and ambulances were rushing to the scene near the village of Fotina.

Relatives of passengers also hurried to Fotina and demanded to be taken to the site, but authorities placed it off-limits.

"We lost our relatives, we are in great pain, you must let us go to them," the uncle of one passenger pleaded with police.

The plane vanished from radar screens during its second approach to Salonika after a flight from Kiev via Odessa.

Transport Minister Tasos Mandelidis said after listening to a tape recording of a dialogue between Salonika's control tower and the plane that it appeared the pilot had become disoriented.

The airliner, with 62 passengers and eight crew, belonged to state carrier air Ukraine. It was being operated by Aerosweet airlines, a Ukrainian-Israeli concern.

The company's general manager said it had been used because Aerosweet's Boeing 737-200 had developed a technical problem.

Compounding the tragedy, a Greek air force C-130 transport plane participating in the search crashed near Athens, killing five crew.

Locals saw the plane fly straight into a mountain at about 0730 GMT shortly after taking off from a military airport. The defence ministry said it believed there were no survivors.

New Zealanders rate landscape and Lomu over literature and heritage

WELLINGTON (AFP) — Opera diva Kiri Te Kanawa may be more famous internationally than rugby icon Jonah Lomu but most of their compatriots would prefer tickets to a test match rather than to Tosca.

New Zealanders are much prouder of their country's beauty and sporting heroes than of their culture and heritage, a new survey says.

The research by the Millennium Office to discover New Zealanders' attitudes towards celebrating the event found 88 per cent of those surveyed strongly agreed they were proud of the country's beauty.

Rugged landscapes and robust rugby heroes evoke a greater sense of national pride than cultural figures and heritage, the New

Zealand Press Association reported Saturday.

Only 36 per cent strongly agreed they were proud of the Maori heritage and culture and 38 per cent strongly agreed they were proud of the European early settler heritage, which began around two hundred years ago.

Other popular themes were the importance of family;

pride in world firsts like Sir Edmund Hillary's first ascent of Mount Everest; pride in New Zealand sports people and a sense that New Zealanders' achievements were all the more impressive because it was a small country.

Internal Affairs Minister Jack Elder said the research provided a good base on which to build millennium celebrations.

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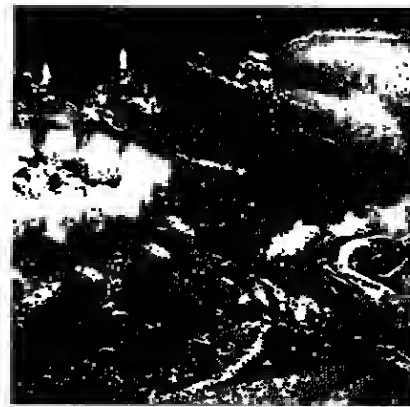


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Officials test dozens for bird flu but say Hong Kong is safe

HONG KONG (AP) — Dozens more people are being tested for the potentially deadly bird flu virus, an official said Friday, as the Hong Kong government assured tourists it is still safe to visit.

"I wouldn't say hundreds, but at least tens" of people are being tested for the influenza A H5N1 virus, said Elinda Luk, spokeswoman for the hospital authority.

The virus, until recently found only in birds, has killed two people and hospitalised at least five others. In addition to these seven confirmed cases, the government has been reporting only two other suspected cases.

Ms. Luk said the larger group of patients being tested are all sick with some kind of influenza virus, but may not have the bird flu virus, a H5N1. She said some are more sick than others, but

refused to say exactly how many people are involved.

Local newspapers said that a 4-year-old boy and a 30-year-old woman were suspected of having bird flu. The woman is related to two small children who are among the known bird flu victims.

Ms. Luk confirmed, "the two people mentioned are among the patients whose samples have been sent for further investigation."

Doctors from the World Health Organisation and the Centres for Disease Control in the United States say they are still not sure if the virus is being transmitted from birds to humans or humans to humans.

If transmission is human-to-human, since the virus is new and few people have immunity to it, a worldwide pandemic is possible, they say.

But despite the scare, the

government moved to assure travellers that Hong Kong remains a safe destination.

The department of health issued a two-page fact sheet quoting a World Health Organisation assessment that the present cluster of bird flu cases "has not reached the scale of an outbreak" and that travel restrictions or quarantine measures are not needed.

However, the sheet advises visitors to avoid sick or diseased poultry while in Hong Kong, and take the same precautions they would to avoid any flu virus, such as ventilating rooms and washing hands.

The government said the fact sheet would be distributed by the Hong Kong tourist association and government offices overseas.

Hong Kong's tourist industry is already suffering a slump in arrivals since the

July 1 return to Chinese rule, partly because so many people came before the handover and partly because of the regional economic crisis.

Doctors say it is safe to eat cooked chicken and other poultry, but that it may not be safe to handle birds that have the virus.

Many Hong Kong people buy live chickens and kill and pluck them at home. Asked if they should be warned against this, a spokesman at the government's special working group on H5N1, Alex Li, said: "I think it's very safe."

But an hour later he called back and recommended that anyone handling a live chicken wash their hands immediately.

"This type of flu virus doesn't survive long in the environment, so it can quickly be killed by disinfection," he said.

Jordan Times

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Moderation in steps

THE CONVINCING victory scored by the so-called "doves" over "hawks" in the recent elections for the Shura Council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) is indicative of the political mood not only in the main opposition party but also in the country and perhaps in the region as a whole. When hard-liners in the IAF manage to secure just 25 seats in the 120-member council at a time when the stage had been set for a huge loss by the moderates following the decision they grudgingly accepted to boycott the parliamentary elections, the outcome means that Jordan's Islamists continue to favour working within the system and not in isolation of what is happening elsewhere in the Islamic World. Witness the recent developments in Iran where the pendulum has swung to the direction of moderation and accommodation. For this moderate trend to take root in the Middle East, however, there has to be an appreciation of the circumstances which gave rise to fundamentalist movements and an understanding of the conditions under which they would move in one direction or another. The Israeli body politic in particular has failed to take enough practical and ideological steps in order to encourage moderation in the region as such.

Till this point in time, the ultra-religious and right-wing factions are calling the shots in the current government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As long as they continue to maintain a tight grip on the reign of power in the Jewish state, the fortunes of moderation and peaceful accommodations would not look too promising in this part of the world.

True, the last Israeli national elections were not decisive since the Likud Party won power by only a razor thin majority just as the Labour Party and its strategic allies lost by a very small margin. Which shows that the Israeli voters have yet to pronounce themselves in a convincing way on the question of peace and coexistence with their neighbours. But the next Knesset elections are still two and half years away, and the forces of moderation in the region might not be able to withstand the pressures resulting from waiting too long for the Israelis to vote overwhelmingly for peace. There are all sorts of extra-parliamentary ways available to Israelis to speak out in defence of moderation and common sense. Staying silent for much longer, however, could only invite a counter negative reaction from the Arab side which in its cumulative effect may easily reverse the tide in favour of rejectionism and maximalist demands.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Sultan Hattab Saturday said the Western media keep portraying Saddam Hussein as a superman armed with various weapons of mass destruction and threatening not only his neighbours but the world at large. But seldom does this media carry reports about the hungry, the sick and the destitute Iraqi women and children or about the thousands of people dying every month as a result of lack of medicine and food, said the writer. While the Iraqi leadership keeps bragging about its ability to withstand the sanctions and cursing the Western powers, notably the U.S., the Iraqi people continue to suffer under the crippling effects of the embargo, he added. At the same time the U.S. and Britain continue to blackmail the Gulf states, warning them against an enemy in Baghdad that is ready to invade them unless they hold on to Western forces and the Western allies to provide them with protection, Hattab said. He said Western media, which suffices itself with describing Saddam Hussein and his regime as dictators, is bent on attacking others while they mention nothing about the disabled, the sick and the lack of medical equipment and ambulances to carry the sick and dying to hospitals.

Al Ra'i's Tayseer Zibri said the European nations which realise that it is Israel which is responsible for lack of peace in the Middle East, do very little to help bring about a settlement. The Arabs have been hearing Europeans express their dismay over Israel's attitude and voicing concern over the present situation, especially in view of the continued Israeli intransigence and its building of settlements on Arab lands, but they are not taking a single step even at the economic and trade level with Israel to help put an end to Israel's arrogance, said the writer. It seems that the Europeans are comfortable with providing financial help to the Palestinians and other Arabs and are not crossing the line which is drawn for them by the U.S. although they can see that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scoffing at peace and the peace process and the Oslo accords which they all support by word rather than deed, Zibri said. He said it is no longer acceptable to the Arab countries to see Europe opting for a passive stand, unable to bridge the Israeli intractable behaviour because the Arabs know that the Europeans can, at least at the economic level, act effectively to bring about justice and also protect their own interests in this region.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Time to draw the line on excessive borrowing

AT ONE time, Jordanian governments dealt with external borrowing as if it were a gold mine for easy money. Governments were able to invest by borrowing, and to cover budget deficit by borrowing. The outstanding loans reached 200 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The result was inevitable. I recall having warned the government in advance and persisted in my criticism between 1982 and 1988, but the officials of the day, who got addicted to easy money, were annoyed by the comments and described them as irresponsible and threatening to shake public confidence and harm the country.

By 1988 we arrived at the logical results and found ourselves obliged to knock on the doors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), reduce the standard of living of our people, and implement a harsh austerity programme. The Jordanian people paid the deferred price of easy money which the government utilised to avoid proper taxation and curb public expenditure.

Under the IMF economic adjustment programme, 1992-1998, Jordan's outstanding external indebtedness started to decline, first because of partial repayment, second because of buying-back some commercial debt at a price well below 50 per cent of the nominal value, third because of rescheduling at generous reductions, and finally because of the writing off of the U.S. debt and part of the British debt for political considerations.

Recently, Jordan's indebtedness in absolute figures ceased to decline. On the contrary it gradually resumed

growth. We are now consoling ourselves by stressing the fact that the growth of the economy is faster than the growth of debt thus reducing the ratio of debt to GDP, now on the order of 90 per cent.

The draft budget for 1998, currently under discussion in the Parliament, admits that our borrowing in 1998 will exceed our repayments, and therefore our external indebtedness will rise by some \$62 million.

For the last 10 years, Jordan did not borrow commercially, perhaps because commercial loans were not available to us. Things changed now as Jordan almost restored its creditworthiness. The question is whether we shall revert back to the practice of borrowing. As a matter of fact the IMF is urging us to borrow commercially. A \$100 million loan in favour of Jordan was in the making when the Far East crisis erupted and created a negative atmosphere which may interfere with underwriting the commercial loan.

The so-called soft loans are worth some consideration, especially those provided by the World Bank to finance specific projects, or offered as a carrot for implementing some prescribed restructuring reforms, or provided by the IMF to cover the gap in the balance of payments and as a reward for performing some desirable reforms and adhering to the programme and achieving its targets.

Those loans are soft only in the length of the maturity dates. They are very hard in every other respect. Few people recognise that the World Bank loans are more

costly than commercial loans as far as interest rates are concerned. Unlike commercial loans they are not subject to rescheduling under any circumstances. Failure to pay on time exposes the borrower country to sanctions. The mark up in interest rates above the market rate is the main source of the billions of dollars of surpluses realised by the World Bank every year at the expense of the developing nations.

At one time I was under the impression that the World Bank was sometimes ready to extend loans as a form of assistance to the countries concerned. I learn now that the World Bank is actually anxious to lend as much as it can in order to make money. It is offering Jordan and other so-called active countries more money than they need. It is acting like any merchant bank eager to do business.

It is time to raise the red flag and warn against excessive borrowing simply because the funds are available. We are about to reach a dangerous area and must draw the line before it is too late.

Our fresh borrowing should, by no means, exceed our repayment of old loans. Economic development and confronting poverty through borrowing is a risky policy, let alone accepting World Bank loans to finance converting Palestinian temporary camps into final settlements, a project that the chairman of the World Bank is very enthusiastic about for reasons that are not difficult to understand.

Albright's latest Mideast manoeuvres spell tactical not policy shifts

By S.B. Lasensky

WHEN SECRETARY of State Albright met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Europe on Dec. 17, for the second time in as many weeks, some expected she would read him the riot act. Ever since the less-than-successful U.S. attempt to rescue November's Middle East North Africa economic summit in Qatar, and recent disunity within the Gulf coalition, Albright has tried to inject some tough love into U.S. peacemaking efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Suddenly, the secretary of state is shuttling between European capitals in a high-profile attempt to push the process forward.

The secretary's new attempt at "out of area" shuttle diplomacy is a tactical shift, not a major policy change.

This initiative is aimed at bolstering U.S. credibility in the region, and providing triage to a still deteriorating process. However, Albright's renewed commitment to more active U.S. mediation will eventually collide with an administration unwilling to take bold risks for peace.

First, it must be recognised that U.S. policy makers are caught between a rock and a hard place. In rhetoric, Albright and her peace team unfailingly invoke the Oslo accords. But in reality, U.S. policy has walked a careful line between selective endorsement and benign neglect. Beyond support for the "land for peace" principle, top U.S. policy makers are reluctant to provide a detailed road map at this juncture because they believe the situation is not ripe for real progress.

Since Washington is unable to put forward a credible alternative, and unwilling to

abandon a process that bears President Bill Clinton's endorsement, there is no choice but to maintain this precarious diplomatic holding pattern. The Oslo ideal may have died with Yitzhak Rabin, Palestinian suicide bombers and Har Homa, but the Oslo deal remains a reality on the ground — and the U.S. is in no position to abandon the only deal around.

This latest initiative is aimed at building a firewall around a faltering process. If Albright really wanted to turn screws on the parties she would shuttle between Mideast, rather than European capitals. Whether or not the Israelis and Palestinians can translate the current momentum into tangible progress remains to be seen, but Albright has clearly decided to jettison the hands-off approach she followed earlier this year.

The architects of U.S.-Mideast diplomacy have realised that should the process deteriorate further, the U.S. cannot afford to be perceived as sidelined. Washington must maintain a constant presence at the helm.

Albright's latest effort also appears to reflect a change of heart. The secretary of state seems intent to follow James Baker's example of hard-nosed bargaining at the Israeli-Palestinian souk.

It is no secret that the former secretary of state has held long discussions with Albright on the subject, and that she has retained Baker's top Mideast advisors. If this is the case, Albright has chosen a mistaken metaphor. Baker only sought concessions on the modalities of a process — and he was backed one hundred per cent by President George Bush. In stark contrast, Albright wants Israel to commit to a substantive land withdrawal — and she does so without the unequivocal backing of

President Clinton. If she truly has developed a more vigorous stance toward the Mideast, Albright would be better served by fixing her sights closer to home.

Netanyahu knows he can call Albright's bluff because Clinton has so far proved unwilling to commit his time and personal prestige to the task of untying the Israeli-Palestinian Gordian knot.

After his re-election, Clinton hinted of a new policy of assertive evenhandedness with his criticisms of Israeli settlement activity and charges that Israel was building "mistrust." But since the spring, the administration has backed down and chosen to avoid a direct confrontation with Israel's supporters in the U.S.

This is a mistake since the American Jewish community no longer speaks with one voice on Mideast issues. The administration should pay more attention to the increasing pluralisation of the "Israel lobby," and build stronger ties to the pro-OSLO organisations.

Albright cut her diplomatic heels in the Carter administration — but Clinton is no Jimmy Carter. Not only does the president lack Carter's long-standing, personal commitment to Mideast peace, but Al Gore has apparently stepped in to oppose those voices in the administration who want a more assertive policy. It is precisely this political interference from the White House that will ultimately save Bibi from a Shamir-style run-in with the powers that be in Washington.

Despite a series of glaring Israeli mishaps — including the delayed transferring of aid to Jordan, the Shein Bein extradition fiasco, and Bibi's poor handling of American Jewish fallout over the conversion bill —

the U.S.-Israel "special relationship" stands on solid ground. Clinton and Gore will not allow the relationship to return to the acrimony that plagued the Lebanon war and intifada years. (Though Israeli leaders should not fool themselves into believing that this administration's good graces are limitless).

Albright's latest Mideast gambit is a tactical move to stabilise the peace process and bolster U.S. credibility following less than successful performances in Baghdad and Doha.

If Madeleine Albright has indeed discovered a newfound commitment to Mideast peacemaking, she may accomplish more by shuttling between Foggy Bottom (a popular Washington, D.C. neighbourhood) and the White House in order to get this administration to match her tough words with tough action. Washington cannot dictate the terms of a solution, but neither does its influence fall on deaf ears (and budgets) in the Middle East — which leaves plenty of diplomatic space for the U.S. to effect positive change.

This administration needs to be reminded that in the post-cold war international setting, U.S. strategic and moral interests are served by continued Israeli-Arab reconciliation and a robust peace process.

S.B. Lasensky writes frequently on international affairs; his articles have appeared in The Christian Science Monitor and The Boston Globe. Lasensky, currently a PhD candidate in Political Science at Brandeis University, served as a Public Affairs Officer for the Israeli Foreign Ministry (1993-95). He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Selling fake history to children

By Natalia Ilyin

NEW YORK — My grandmother met Rasputin.

He came to her family's house for dinner in Kazan in 1905.

He was slovenly, grandiose, and was wearing two silk Russian blouses, one over the other, to proclaim his prosperity.

Distracted by anxiety over a neighbour's illness, he stayed only a short time, which was fine with my grandmother.

Rasputin took his leave in the foyer. The children were all present. My grandmother was 10. Her brothers, Dmitri and Alik, stood near their father, a widower.

Rasputin put his hand on my grandmother's head. "She will live long," he said.

My grandmother lived to be 97. But the rest of her family died young. During the Communist takeover in 1918, her father was shot in the back of the head and thrown into a lime pit.

Red troops found Alik, wounded after a skirmish, bayoneted him and threw him into a river. Dmitri was later shot to death in a Stalinist purge.

Now my nephew is

playing with the Rasputin toy that came with his chicken tenders and fries. It's from Burger King's promotional tie-in with the new movie "Anastasia." Pull both arms out and Rasputin's head falls off. Press a button on his back and everything pops back into place.

There's a phrase for what the moviemakers did: It's called cultural appropriation.

How do I tell my 6-year-old nephew and my 7-year-old niece that this was no fairy tale?

In the animated movie's story, Anastasia, the daughter of the czar, escapes the clutches of the evil Rasputin and somehow later misses being killed with the rest of her family. Then she falls in love with the boy who saved her.

How do I tell my niece and nephew that life does not always pop back into place?

The real Anastasia was shot in a basement. Then she was doused with

gasoline, burned and dumped in a pit, along with the rest of her family.

Later, a delusional girl was fished out of a German river and claimed to be Anastasia. After she died, DNA tests proved once and for all that her story was a hoax.

There's a phrase for what the moviemakers did: It's called cultural appropriation.

People who have led miserable lives and died miserable deaths are reincarnated as heroes. This has been going on since celluloid was invented.

But the difference here is that this film is marketing a false version of modern history to children.

I can't tell my niece the truth about Anastasia; she's too young to hear the truth.

But for 20th Century Fox, she is not too young to be told a lie.

The writer, who teaches in the graphic design department at Yale University in the U.S. state of Connecticut, is the author of the forthcoming "Blonde Like Me." This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

LETTERS

Water to spare?

To the editor:

I HAVE read on occasion that in a few decades the real crisis facing the region we live in will be not land and people, but water. Thus, we are instructed by television, newspapers, and other channels of information to "save water, every drop counts." As I write this, I am looking down the street where I live on Jabal Hussein at a not too unfamiliar scene. Bubbling up from under the sidewalk in front of one of my neighbour's houses is a literal torrent of water that has been flowing down the street now for four days. I would estimate that probably no less than 100,000 litres of water has gone literally down the drain so far and I have seen no indication that anyone is coming to stop the flood. This is only one house.

Having lived in this place for about eight years now, I can say conservatively that there is hardly a day where I have not seen major flows of water coming down different streets on Jabal Hussein. On some days I saw five or six major leaks in different places — some of these leaks continue for days. Since the area that I am familiar with is quite limited, I am wondering how representative this catastrophe is of other areas of the city. Is Jabal Hussein sitting on a gigantic lake of water, where we have plenty to spare? Do residents in other parts of Amman, like myself, have to ford rivers many times to get across the street?

I have no idea how the water authorities are tackling this problem, but when major leaks flow on for days with no one doing anything, we can conclude one (or more) of the following: (1) There really is no upcoming water crisis and we should ignore all the ads about saving water — we've got more water

than Holland, apparently. (2) The authorities don't know about these leaks? Unlikely. But if true, then there is a major communication problem here. (3) People who should be doing something about it are busy doing other things. If this is true, then we are back at the first conclusion — apparently it isn't important enough to do anything about. (4) The problem is on a scale too huge for the present system to get on top of. If this is true, then we are headed for a real catastrophe. There simply is no excuse to let 100,000 litres of water flow through our hands. If I had the tools and the permission I would fix it myself.

Bob Robertson
 Amman

'Anti-semitism' claims

To the editor:

I READ with some shock the article (Jordan Times, Dec. 18-19, "Netanyahu to hand Alhithi allegations of Palestinian anti-semitism") on Israel's "anti-semitism" complaints to the PNA. If I am not mistaken, Arabs are semitic, too. Although the Western media has not made this distinction and has accepted Israel as the only semitic representative, I am quite surprised that the Jordan Times would join in. We should not let this be done in the Arab World. The term "anti-semitic" should apply to all semitic peoples, not just the Jews.

Sheila B. Cassidy
 Riverside Middle East Research
 Project
 Riverside, California
 U.S.A.

Delicatessen

FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO YOUR TABLE.. ENJOY!

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Cheeses,

ITALIAN
Mortadella and
Prociutto,
Parma Ham
and Salami.

AUSTRIAN
Cold Cuts
(Beef and
Turkey)

SCOTCH
Smoked Salmon.



FRESH FRENCH
Sea Food

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MUSSELS

SCALOPE

OYSTERS

SALMON

SARDINE

CLAMS

CRAB

OCTOPUS

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SNAILS.**

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SALZBURGER Xmas Stoffel Cake

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Jordan cuts interest rates to spur economy

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — Jordan's Central Bank said Saturday it cut its benchmark discount rate to 7.75 per cent from 8.00 per cent, consolidating a downward trend in interest rates since June prompted by positive economic fundamentals.

A Central Bank official told Reuters the move "is a strong signal to stimulate banks to reduce further deposits and lending rates which have not gone down sufficiently in line with the drop in interest rates."

Repurchase rates on certificates of deposit were also cut to 9.00 per cent from 9.50 per cent, the third drop since last July when it was 10.00 per cent.

Jordan's monetary authorities expect private banks to bring deposits and in particular lending rates more in line with a gradual downward trend in interest rates since monetary policy was eased in mid-year after a string of positive economic fundamentals in 1997.

So far interest rates, on deposits — now ranging around 8-9.5 per cent and lending rates — currently at between 11-15 per cent — have not fallen enough in line with the official interest rate cuts.

But some bankers argue the impact of the Central Bank's eased interest rate policy needed at least six months to begin to translate into lower deposits and lending rates by banks, essential to give a boost to Jordan's economic activity.

"It is difficult for interest rates on deposits to go down sharply, it has to go down gradually and over a period of time... interest rates need at least six months because the bank would have deposits for a month, for six months and one year," said senior banker Mifteh Aqel.

One bank, Jordan Export and Finance Bank, has announced it will lower by 0.75 per cent its prime rate as of Jan. 1, 1998 in a move which is expected to be followed by other banks.

In July the Central Bank cut its discount rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 8.25 per cent, in the first rate change in nearly eight years. It also cut repurchase rates on certificates of deposit by 0.25 per cent to 9.75 per cent in July from 10.00 per cent.

"The Central Bank wants to send a clear and strong message to the banking community that interest rates have to go down," added Mr. Aqel.

Yields on certificates of deposit (CDs), a key interest rate indicator, have dropped by three percentage points to 6.25 per cent from 9.25 per cent in July, before the bank introduced competitive auctions as part of capital market reforms.

But the Central Bank has felt more comfortable to keep lowering yields on CDs as net foreign currency reserves reached record levels this year, officials and bankers say.

Net foreign currency cash reserves have more than doubled since the start of the year to around 1.7 billion dinars — close to an IMF (International Monetary Fund) three months import cover figure, officials said.

A more sophisticated monetary policy, which has shouldered the burden of jumpstarting the economy in 1997, has raised investors confidence after a series of landmark measures this year, the centerpiece of which was the scrapping of all foreign exchange controls introduced last July.

The Central Bank should meet a target of eight per cent growth in money supply by year-end, substantially higher than the previous years' around three per cent, bankers say.

Bankers say injecting more available credit after years in which banks have been putting a tight lid on lending is expected to rejuvenate the business cycle and spur investments as early as the first quarter of 1998.

Industrialists and bankers expect more liquidity will also have a spinoff effect on the Amman Financial Market (AFM), which has suffered from a shortage of cash as high interest rates drove small investors to higher yield bank deposits.

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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Transport Privatization of the Aqaba Railway Corporation Request for Expressions of Interest

The Government of Jordan is seeking expressions of interest for firms to operate the Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) under a concession agreement.

ARC is a state-owned company that provides rail service from phosphate mines owned by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) at Abiad and Hassa, and Shidiya for export through the port at Aqaba. The mine at Shidiya, is not presently served by rail, and rail service is provided via a transshipment facility.

The concession will include:

- operation and maintenance of ARC;
- financing and construction by the concession of a rail extension to the JPMC mine at Shidiya, under a BTO arrangement (build, transfer and operate); and
- investment in upgrading and overhaul of locomotives and wagons.

Construction of the extension and improvements in operations and equipment will make at least 5 million tonnes of phosphate available to be moved by rail per year, compared with the present level of 2.5-3.0 million tonnes per year.

The Government is also considering including as part of the concession, the financing, construction, and operation of a rail link between Aqaba and the Aqaba Industrial Area (Wadi II), which will require additional investment by the concession. This extension will increase the traffic available by an estimated 3.5 million tonnes.

An efficient ARC is vital to the competitiveness of JPMC, one of Jordan's major exporters, therefore the Government is looking for experienced railway operators, with financial capability to undertake this project. The Government is seeking expressions of interest from firms or consortia with the following operating and financial capabilities:

- a) average annual turnover (defined as works in progress and completed) over the last five years of US Dollars 100 million equivalent, and;
- b) successful experience in the development, implementation and operation (including procurement of rail equipment, provision of maintenance services, and overall management) of heavy railway freight trains.

If your firm or consortium meets these conditions, we would be pleased to receive an indication of interest, accompanied by a statement of your qualifications and capabilities.

It is the intention of the Government to conduct a competitive bidding process for the selection of the concessionaire. We will review the expressions of interest received and prepare a short list of candidates for the next Stage which will involve the submission of Technical Proposals by candidate firms or consortia. An announcement of the short list will take place early in 1998.

The implementation of the concession is the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport which has engaged CPCSC Transcom Ltd. to assist in the matter.

Please forward your expressions of interest no later than January 25, 1998, to the attention of:

Mr. Yahia Jdaitawi
Director of Railway Department
Ministry of Transport
Government of Jordan
P. O. Box 35214,
Amman 11180
Jordan
Tel: 962-6-5518111
Fax: 962-6-5527233

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You'll be asked to prove you can do something that you've been bragging you could. Well, if you're as good as you say, you won't have any problem. If you've been exaggerating a little bit, you'd better get busy practicing.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It's a great time of year for travel and higher education. You should always start school during the winter quarter. You make such a marvellous impression on everyone that the rest of the year goes by easily. And you might as well celebrate the winter solstice with some sort of an expedition.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's confusion again this morning, but by the end of the day it will be all sorted out. If you have a good partnership, the two of you will be talking about how to spend the money you have together. That's always interesting, and today it's a slam-dunk. Spend it on something for the house.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're finally learning learning how to do whatever you've been struggling with. Somebody's coming to your rescue. It could be an expert that you've hired. It could be your own spouse. It could be all of the above. At any rate, you're not in this alone anymore. Relax and enjoy the support.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're going to have to work harder for the next few weeks to maintain what you've achieved so far. This always happens this time of year, so it shouldn't be that much of a disappointment. Look at it as work that you do for fun. That would be the positive approach.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're going to be tempted to spend money on pretty things. If you're on a tight budget, that could be a problem, but if you've saved up a little for situations like this, you'll have a marvellous time shopping. Tonight you'll find it easier to express yourself romantically. Try it!

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There are all sorts of changes going on today. You may get a chance to spend more time at home. At least you should plan on being there this evening. You may even have company coming over. That would be an excellent use of your time. Conditions are good for a party.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're more interested in learning. What could you learn that would make your life easier? What could you learn that could help you contribute? What could you learn that would just flat out be fun? There are three classes for you right there. Better get going.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) For the next several weeks, you'll have to learn how to manage your money. If you don't, you could end up flatter than a pancake, chase-wise. Of course, the holidays are coming up and most of your shopping still needs to be done. Why don't you make some of your presents?

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're lucky in a zillion different ways. You have more enthusiasm and power and confidence. That'll be tested today, interestingly enough. The moon is going into Libra. That would indicate there's a difficult assignment coming up. No problem. You're ready for it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have to finish up everything you promised to do all last year. If you do, you'll become prosperous beyond your wildest dreams. Start with the easy stuff and work from there.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll be going to parties and doing group activities and getting involved with charities and all sorts of things. It's a very fun time of year for you. And if you approach it wisely, you'll also do a lot of good and get a lot of work done. That's your intention, starting today.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Egypt seeks Asian investors to fight main cause of terrorism

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is trying to convince Asian firms to open factories in impoverished areas of southern Egypt as part of its fight against fundamentalism, a senior official has said.

The government has already launched talks with investors in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Philippines, said Ibrahim Fawzi, the chairman of the state-run Public Investment Authority.

"The main cause of terrorism is poverty and we have prepared a development plan for the impoverished areas of Upper

Egypt to attract investors to set up schemes to create jobs," Mr. Fawzi said.

"We are proposing the creation of factories which would be leased very cheaply to investors on an off-shore status," Mr. Fawzi said.

These factories would be built in the southern provinces of Qena, Assiut and Mallawi and could be devoted to such activities as the production of ready-to-wear clothes, he said.

"We don't want high-technology investments which would create few

jobs," Mr. Fawzi said.

The investment authority plans on building factories which would create "one job per four square meters," he said.

Tourism, a pillar of Egyptian economy, was shattered after the Nov. massacre of 58 holiday-makers and four Egyptians in the southern resort of Luxor.

Southern Egypt, a stronghold of fundamentalists, is the country's most impoverished region, according to official statistics.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Set up for a drive
- Venezian-blind
- Sonsman's
- outlay
- Speak wildly
- Leg bone
- Fitzgerald of seat
- Composer
- Khachaturian
- Not the least bit
- Depend
- Ravel
- Former Attorney General Edwin
- Adress Davis
- Pl. of speech
- Newspaper
- revenue
- DC advisory grp.
- Finney
- Mrs. Archie
- Burker
- Wooden barrel
- Ravel
- Sioux tribe
- Adress Hassa
- Stable seed of an evergreen
- Out of the bus
- W. Hemisphere
- grp.
- 867-65-4321 grp.
- Broadcasting
- SS Column type
- Ravel
- Hassas e pledge
- Hogan's
- Heroes' costar
- Food piece
- Big-mouth
- pitcher
- Congress catcher
- Australian golfer
- Brill
- William, the
- Quaker
- Lord of the
- Rings' hero
- Lika horse's
- hooves

DOWN

- Mental distress
- Merted
- Ducks and
- doggies
- Samples
- Mikita of hockey
- Contest at law
- Grow less
- Leaning one
- Salt spring
- Ice mass
- Bottle of brew
- Unkindly
- Deposits
- Japanese
- fencing
- Bother
- persistently
- 25 Jai
- Circular plate
- Okay-dokay
- Girl of the house
- Take out bows
- compos
- manis
- Halloween
- collectors
- Addison-Steele
- periodical
- 49 in heaven
- Danny of "Radio Days"
- Long, tiresome
- speech
- Calvin or Balbo
- Preminger or Kruger
- "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" guy
- Kn of a pile
- Gedance count
- Stupified state
- Buddhist sect

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HAKEY

YAST

MARKED

KOJECY

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: ADAGE SORRY SHAKEN CUREFV
Answer: Why the locksmith's computer didn't work — HE USED THE WRONG KEY

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Riedel: Germans have real interest to invest in Jordan and to increase imports from the Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — The German business community has a real interest in making investments in Jordan and in transferring modern technology to the Kingdom in order to bolster economic ties between the two countries, Marita Riedel, the representative of the German Chamber of Industry and Trade in Jordan, has said.

She indicated in an interview that Jordan has been dealing with 1,500 German firms, including five major ones which maintain offices in the Middle East region.

The peace process, she said, has given impetus to the German private sector to invest in Jordan and in other countries of the Middle East. "German firms have opened regional offices in Amman, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt to attain that goal," Mrs. Riedel added.

She added that Germany is constantly strengthening its economic and trade links with the Arab World in general and the countries of this region in particular. "Germany is keen on increasing its imports from Jordan and hopes to achieve this through Jordanian industrial institutions and through orienting the German

public on the Jordanian products," Mrs. Riedel emphasised.

Noting that Germany's exports to Jordan amount to almost half a billion marks annually, Mrs. Riedel said that Jordan can increase its exports to Germany by exerting more efforts to sell high quality products to German markets. She explained that through the German chamber of industry and trade, Bonn is trying to increase such exports and also to help the Jordanian industrial sector by providing expertise and advice. "Such cooperation is bound to increase now that Jordan has signed an association agreement with the European Union," the German representative asserted.

Mrs. Riedel is scheduled to organise a presentation meeting with the Jordanian business community on Sunday during which she will be showing documentary films to promote Jordanian-German economic and trade cooperation.

According to Mrs. Riedel, the German chamber of industry and trade maintains 85 offices in various parts of Germany most of which maintain very close contacts with the Arab World.

Large Aqaba project expected to give major boost for Jordanian tourism industry

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan plans to launch a multi-million dollar plan in February to develop the shores of Aqaba, straddling them with 14 hotels around a man-made lagoon, as part of efforts to lure more tourists.

The ten-year plan to build an integrated resort will be one of the largest investments in the Kingdom's tourism sector since the creation of modern Jordan, said Bassam Maayeh, managing director of the Business and Tourism Company (BTC). The firm has drafted the plan and will construct the lagoon and other facilities.

The resort, which will have 14 four and five-star hotels, will be located west of Aqaba city centre and

north of the limited traditional beach area, a 15-minute drive from the airport. It will have a recreational park and an entertainment island linked to the hotels.

In addition to BTC, some independent investors, including Gulf and Arab financiers, will build and operate their own hotels on land parcels sold by the BTC "within a framework of legal, architectural and operational guidelines" set by the company, Mr. Maayeh added.

The island's restaurants, clubs, amusement sites, conference and commercial centres, as well as a golf course and polo field, horse back riding track, tennis and squash courts and a big shopping mall, are expected to attract thousands of additional tourists every year.

Many visitors to Aqaba who have also been to the over-developed neighbouring Israeli Red Sea town of Eilat and Egypt's Sharm Al Sheikh resort have long complained of the city's limited facilities and infrastructure.

"We see that Aqaba has not developed in the same manner as other Red Sea resorts," Mr. Maayeh explained.

The project will involve dredging from the Red Sea to feed the lagoon that will be set up on an open area currently owned by the government, Mr. Maayeh said.

The area's flat topography, under-utilised land and sea front encouraged BTC to develop a master plan for the resort.

"The development of an entertainment or leisure island as a central theme

would provide the resort with a unique focus that includes a range of food and beverage outlets with themes and animation shows accessible to all hotel guests," Mr. Maayeh said.

The Cabinet approved the project proposal on May 25 after it won the backing of the tourism ministry, he said.

Jordan unveiled a string of legislation to attract foreign investments, liberalise the market and enhance privatisation after a severe economic crisis in 1988. It signed a partnership agreement with the 15-nation European Union in late November and plans to join the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation next year.

Mr. Maayeh said these legislations and developments, backed by Jordan's

1994 peace treaty with Israel that helped generate a flood of tourists to the region, were all factors in favour of such a major investment in under-developed Aqaba.

Despite the hardline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Jordan's tourism industry remains one of the fastest-growing sectors in the Kingdom, contributing to 11 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

Jordan currently has 157 hotels with 9,268 rooms — up from 5,793 rooms in 1984, according to Ministry of Tourism figures. The bulk of hotels are located in Amman, followed by Aqaba (17 per cent) and Petra (10 per cent).

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7810	0.6001	1.4385	129.40	1.4321	1746.55	2.0010	5.9567
DE Mark	0.5615	-	0.3368	0.8076	72.64	0.8039	980.38	1.1235	3.3441
GB Sterling	1.6864	2.9860	-	2.3811	214.69	2.3866	2910.45	3.3345	9.9262
CH Franc	0.6562	123.77	0.4168	-	89.93	0.9952	1213.72	139.20	4.1295
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3758	0.4633	1.1112	-	1.1063	13.49	154.58	4.6015
CA Dollar	0.6983	1.2511	0.4265	1.0118	1.11	-	1228.85	1.4092	4.1867
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0196	0.3434	0.8324	1361.36	0.8199	-	11.48	3.4103
NL Guilder	0.4998	88.98	0.2896	71.88	64.62	0.7156	872.62	-	2.9761
FR Franc	0.1679	0.2989	0.1007	24.1452	21.70	0.2404	33.59	33.5800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7504	0.3770	3.6400	0.3048	3.6728	1622.50	3.3950
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2897	0.5317	5.1340	0.4298	5.1803	2147.39	4.7884
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0813	0.98	405.96	0.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	5.9480	-	9.86	0.8085	9.74	4038.46	9.0053
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	1.0303	-	0.0637	1.01	418.27	0.9327
Kuwait Dinar	3.2808	2.3261	12.3046	1.2368	11.94	-	12.06	4896.08	0.9327
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0206	0.9911	0.8830	-	414.53	0.9244
Lebanese 1000	0.68	0.4857	2.4633	0.2478	2.3980	0.2002	2.4123	-	2.2299
Egyptian	0.2946	0.2088	1.1047	0.1110	1.0722	0.0898	1.0818	448.45	-

Energy			Mid-East Currencies					
Offs	Last	Previous	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brant	17.43	17.57	SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4760	0.16001	0.38369	34.5161
W. Texas	16.43	16.48	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48906	0.16338	0.3918	35.246
Bonny	17.43	17.57	KW Dinar	3.2806	5.84454	1.96889	4.72144	424.628
Dubai	16.10	16.40	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.7258	1.59185	3.61673	343.407
U.S. Gas	179.00	174.00	CY Pound	1.6097	3.4012	1.1453	2.7471	247.115

Currency Deposit Rates (Bld)									
Period	1-	3-	6-	9-	12-	18-	24-	36-	48-
Ctry	Month	Months	Months	Months	Months	Months	Months	Months	Months
USD	5.81	5.78	5.78	5.84	5.87	-	-	-	-
GBP	7.31	7.58	7.61	7.65	7.65	-	-	-	-
JPY	0.24	0.29	0.21	0.28	0.30	-	-	-	-
DEM	3.55	3.44	3.56	3.62	3.73	-	-	-	-
FRF	3.47	3.57	3.65	3.73	3.81	-	-	-	-
CHF	1.24	1.34	1.43	1.56	1.62	-	-	-	-
ITL	5.87	6.16	6.59	6.27	5.10	-	-	-	-

Main Equity Indices							
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pc Cls
New York	DOW JONES	7758.29	-30.21	-1.15	7848.47	7676.93	7846.5
New York	S&P 500	346.78	-8.52	-2.49	355.3	324.92	346.3
London	FT-SE 100	5020.2	-148.1	-2.97	5163.6	4985.7	5163.3
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15314.89	-346.75	-2.24	15710.8	15170.8	15161.6
Paris	CAC 40	2822.9	-71.6	-2.47	2849.93	2815.69	2845.4
Frankfurt	DAX	4084.75	-81.49	-1.98	4126.33	4064.14	4168.24

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	169	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1708	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	301.8	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	109	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	26.01	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	165	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	370	Spot

JPRC triggers public complaints by turning diesel fuel distribution to gas stations

By Issam Qadamani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Petroleum Refinery

Company (JPRC) has reportedly been swamped by public complaints for its past week's decision to stop distributing diesel

fuel in its own oil tankers and turning this duty over to the various gas stations.

Abdul Wahab Zoubi reacted to the complaints by saying that "the refinery has given licences to 300 gas stations around

the country to distribute fuel and has received 400 additional applications for more gas stations. The company should not compete with the gas stations which should be given the chance to operate in accordance with the terms of the licence given to them."

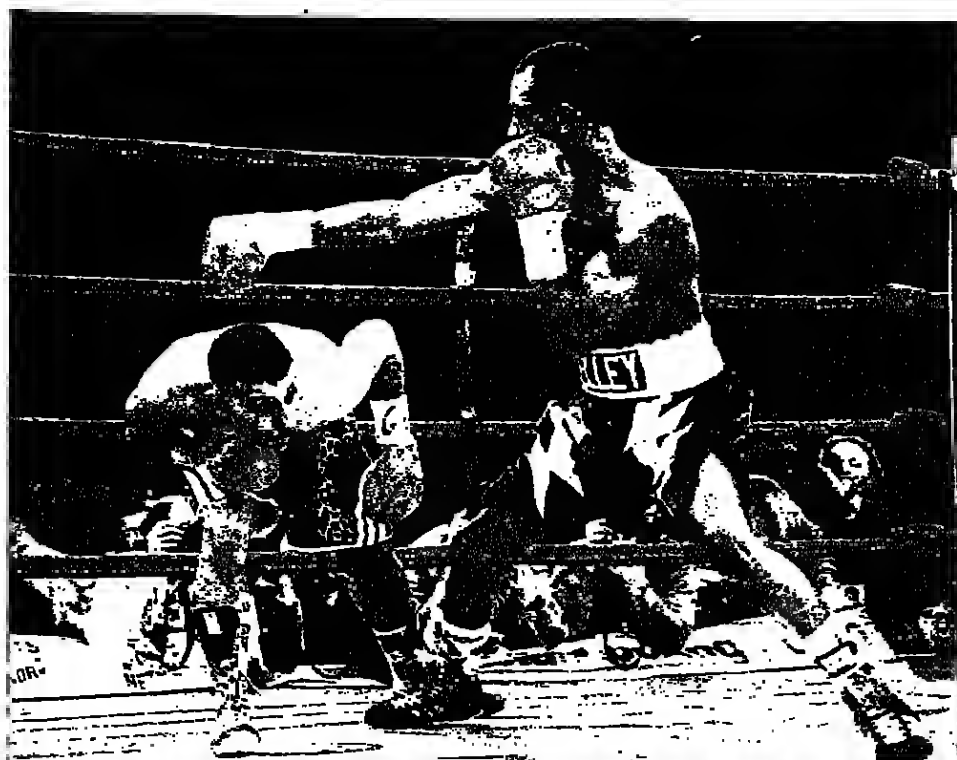
According to company sources, the company's decision was criticised by the public because the public preferred to buy the fuel directly from the refinery since many gas stations, they said, were mixing diesel oil with water and selling the adulterated mixture to the public.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani, backed the refinery's decision saying that as long as the gas stations have got licences they should be given the chance to operate. But he stressed that strict control is being imposed on the fuel distribution process by the concerned authorities. "Violators of regulations like those tampering with quality of the fuel will be referred to court," he emphasised.

He urged the public to report to the concerned authorities any manipulations and violations of the regulations or any suspected tampering with the meters that are fixed to the tankers.

According to Mr. Zoubi, the Department of Standardisation and Metrology as well as the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the general union of fuel distributors together form the official concerned parties to monitor the distribution of fuel and they can always inspect the gas stations' operations to ensure that they abide by the regulations and that their meters give the correct readings.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKSANI										
TELEPHONE: 507171 / 507179										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 20/12/1997										
PAST 12 MONTHS RICH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRAMS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.3	1.22	1	40	33160	330.00	329.00	1.00-
N 2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	6	0.00	23	17501	31701	1.82	1.81	.01-
S 3.650	1.800	BANK OF JORDAN	6.0	0.00	33	33950	63334	1.89	1.80	.01+
S 2.680	1.730	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.4	6.00	28	19664	34172	1.76	1.74	.02-
S 5.300	4.600	THE HOUSING BK.	15.4	3.77	3	275	1413	5.18	5.15	.03-
S 4.180	1.850	JOR. INVEST. BANK	10.7	0.00	4	584	1166	3.19	2.00	.01+
* 980	7.710	JOR. GULF BANK	4.3	10.14	8	11250	7790	.71	.69	.02-
S 4.190	2.920	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	21.3	0.00	3	30000	88800	2.93	2.96	.03+
S 4.050	2.380	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.4	3.85	21	8800	21547	2.44	2.43	.01-
1.530	1.100	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	2	4000	4400	1.10	1.10	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 235.00 CHNG: -0.33										
S 1.740	.910	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	6.3	0.00	2	2000	1830	.91	.91	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 318.31 CHNG: 0.00										
S 2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC. PWR.	9.4	5.35	3	250	485	3.95	1.94	.01-
S 7.500	6.000	VEHICLES OWNERS FID.	8.2	4.67	2	208	780	3.73	3.75	.02+
S 6.100	3.550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	12.0	5.14	2	400	1542	3.70	3.89	.18+
S 1.550	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	2	2500	2730	1.09	1.09	-
S 1.010	.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.3	6.74	2	2750	2648	.90	.89	.03-
S 8.100	4.700	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	28.7	0.00	7	7600	4399	.57	.56	.01-
S 6.900	6.700	ALRAI. FID. INC.	15.0	5.98	1	150	418	8.34	8.38	.04+
S 3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.1	0.00	2	1000	3880	3.85	3.86	.03+
S 3.050	.740	JORDAN EXPT. INV.	9	0.00	1	5000	4750	.95	.95	-
1.090	.900	JORDAN ASSOCIATION	9	0.00	2	500	475	.95	.95	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 309.90 CHNG: +1.11										
S 1.350	.930	ATTARQUEE	9	0.00	2	500	575	1.15	1.35	-
S 4.450	2.990	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.1	3.68	5	850	2544	3.00	2.98	.02-
S 7.050	5.570	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.1	3.09	3	100	620	6.25	6.20	.05-
S 7.000	5.800	JOR. WORTED MILLS	20.3	3.13	3	400	2570	6.40	6.40	-
S 4.700	3.480	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	13.6	4.76	40	304052	433824	4.18	4.20	.02+
S 7.250	4.600	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	4.5	4.52	2	112	495	4.65	4.42	.23-
S 6.000	4.400	ARAB ALUMINA OV. INV.	14.0	4.38	8	17500	101251	5.71	5.71	-
S 3.500	2.720	ALRAI. FID. INC.	6.1	9.65	16	5143	13230	2.55	2.59	.04+
S 5.500	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	11	13050	6003	.45	.46	.01+
S 3.730	.780	ARAB PAPER CORV. TRD.	24.4	0.00	1	350	280	.82	.80	.02-
S 7.770	.530	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	19	23750	13710	.55	.58	.03+
S 4.630	2.700	INTERMED. FIN. CHM.	9	0.00	13	8200	3540	.43	.44	.01+
S 3.000	1.360	JOR. CHEM. INDS.	38.6	4.38	1	250	3143	4.37	4.57	.20+
S 1.650	.410	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDS.	9	0.00	4	2500	3450	.58	.58	-
S 3.000	2.700	ALRAI. FID. INC.	24.3	2.70	2	100	870	2.80	2.90	.10+
S 3.000	1.360	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NPAC	33.3	0.00	16	9750	12377	1.24	1.30	.06+
S 890	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHM.	9	0.00	1	350	150	.61	.60	.01-
S 1.610	1.160	ARAB PHARM. CHM.	15.2	5.88	8	2100	3895	1.24	1.19	.05-
S 820	.800	JOR. PHOS. INDS.	13.5	1.36	16	11300	9860	.77	.88	.11+
S 1.410	.690	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	9.7	13.89	16	9740	3900	.71	.72	.01+
S 1.040	.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	17	3450	30915	.80	.80	-
S 1.970	1.340	EL. & EN. REPAIR WEAR	49.3	0.00	8	2252	3531	1.39	1.40	.01+
S 1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.6	0.00	11	4750	5748	1.21	1.21	-
S 1.200	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.5	0.00	6	7624	7674	1.04	1.01	.04-
.840	.570	HIG. EAST COMPLEX	7.5	16.39	8	17750	10578	.60	.60	.01+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
INDEX: 114.56 CHNG: -0.46										
GRAND TOTAL										
INDEX: 169.21 CHNG: -0.30										
388 425259 963534										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 20/12/1997										
.560	.300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	16	29201	9968	.33	.35	.02+
.610	.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	40	102650	36954	.35	.36	.01+
.800	.660	UNION INV. FID.	9	0.00	18	76000	9960	.71	.71	-
.570	.350	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	31	86799	49333	.46	.48	.02+
N 2.100	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	2	0.00	6	391250	790380	2.10	2.00	.10-
.380	.140	JOR. INDS. MACH. & VEHIC	9	0.00	10	12400	1240	.47	.47	.01-
.650	.460	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	11	11000	5510	.49	.48	.01-
.530	.280	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	35.7	0.00	11	10000	10000	.30	.31	.01+
.370	.380	NATL. MOLT. ENG. NAMED	9	0.00	21	35870	18284	.59	.51	.02-
.760	.640	KHAYAT ORES & WOODS	9	0.00	2	1250	475	.38	.38	-
.660	.580	ELDEKAT PHARM. TSI	9	0.00	6	9500	1803	.64	.66	.02+
I 1.400	.860	UNION TOBACCO TSI	9	0.00	6	636	632	1.40	1.42	.02+
.880	.470	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	5	5090	1515	.91	.91	.01-
.830	.570	INDS. CERAMIC	35.7	0.00	5	7200	1315	.57	.60	.03+
.820	.490	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	20	93000	51150	.55	.55	.75
N 1.000	.660	HAT. ALUMINIUM. TSI	94.6	0.00	5	4100	1763	.67	.68	.01+
GRAND TOTAL										
202 861566 981690										
I : New 12 months high										
+ : New 12 months low										
S : Stock dividend during the past 12 months										
N : Listed during the past 12 months										
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more										
- : Negative P/E										
* : Earning 1/2 zero or N/A for the most recent year										



England's Prince Naseem Hamed (L) ducks a punch from the USA's Kevin Kelley in the second round of their WBO Featherweight title fight at New York's Madison Square Garden. Hamed won the fight in the fourth round (Reuters photo)

Hamed retains crown

NEW YORK (AFP) — Britain's World Boxing Organisation (WBO) featherweight champion Prince Naseem Hamed retained his crown at the Madison Square Garden here Friday when he knocked out American challenger Kevin Kelley in the fourth round of a scheduled twelve round contest.

Hamed survived three visits to the canvas before putting Kelley out for the count with a tremendous left hook.

The British fighter has now won all 29 of his pro bouts and stopped 27 opponents inside the distance.

Kelley, a former WBC titleholder at the weight, has now lost two of 53 contests.

Hamed's entry into the ring was extravagant even by his own standards. It lasted some 10 minutes and was accompanied by a traditional New York ticker-tape reception.

In contrast, Kelley took less than one minute to reach the ring and he was clearly annoyed by Hamed's prolonged entrance.

WBA and IBF heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, and former world champions George Foreman and Floyd

Panerson were present at the ringside to watch the fight.

Hamed, who was floored in the first, second and fourth rounds before scoring his knock-out win after 2mins 37secs of the fourth, laughed off suggestions he had been in trouble during the fight.

After being repeatedly caught by Kelley's punches, Hamed claimed: "I wanted to cause a fight and create some excitement. It was my first fight in the United States and I wanted to show people I could take it."

"All due respect to Kevin but I wanted to take him out and show all my skill. I had to take some shots. I took his shots but did he take mine?"

"I got straight up when he caught me — that's the heart of a lion, a champion's heart," he added.

"I came to America and I proved myself. What more can I say?"

"I'm the best he (Kelley) has boxed. I've got great respect for him but at the end of the day I'm the champion of the world."

Palace again give offer to Brolin

LONDON (AFP) — Crystal Palace manager Steve Coppell said Friday he was ready to give Swedish bad-boy Tomas Brolin a chance to resurrect his controversial career in England.

But Coppell admitted the former Leeds and Parma star would only be a short-term addition to his squad.

Brolin, who starred for Sweden in USA '94, moved to Leeds from Italian club Parma in 1995 but he failed to shine.

Wilkinson and subsequently George Graham struggled to control Brolin amid reports of weight and attitude problems and he has not played since leaving Elland Road in acrimonious circumstances.

But Coppell is prepared to take on Brolin in order to help keep Palace in the Premiership this season.

"He's free at the moment and I've just said if he wants to come and train with us and make himself available then fine," Coppell said.

"We are in contact with him through intermediaries. I think realistically he is only going to commit himself until the end of the season and we probably only have a need until the end of the season."

"But at least we give him an opportunity to re-establish himself. I think he is only 28 but he has got a lot to do."

"He's been out of the game for close to three months so he's got to look for the best opportunity he can in show that he's a top quality player."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Ronaldo wins Golden Ball award

RIYADH (AFP) — Brazilian striker Ronaldo has won the prestigious Golden Ball European Footballer of the Year awarded by the France Football magazine for 1996-97, according to sources at the Confederations Cup here on Friday. The Inter Milan hitman polled the most votes ahead of Real Madrid's Yugoslav striker Pedrag Mijatovic and Juventus' French star Zinedine Zidane. Ronaldo, who scored for Brazil in their 2-0 semi-final win over the Czech Republic here on Friday, was widely expected to capture the award, although the decision will not officially be announced until Monday evening by the magazine. Arsenal's Dutch forward Dennis Bergkamp finished fourth, with Ronaldo's compatriot, Real Madrid wingback Roberto Carlos fifth.

Gillespie pledges future to Newcastle

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — Keith Gillespie on Saturday killed off suggestions that he wants to return to Manchester United by pledging the rest of his career to Newcastle. The 22-year-old Northern Ireland winger is set to put pen to paper even though he still has a year and a half of his current contract to run. Gillespie said: "My contract does not run out until the end of next season. Obviously no new talks have taken place at this stage, but if I was offered a new contract I would sign it immediately. "I am really enjoying my football these days. The run in the side I'm getting has boosted my confidence, and nothing would please me more than to stay at St James' Park for the rest of my career." It is a timely boost for Newcastle ahead of Sunday's game against league leaders, champions and Champions' league quarter finalists Manchester United. "There have been rumours going around since just about the first day I arrived here that I'd eventually go back to Manchester," said the winger.

Vierra keeps job as Iran coach

TEHRAN (AFP) — Brazilian Valdeir Vierra has been retained as coach of Iran, less than a week after the Iranian authorities admitted they wanted to replace him. The dramatic about face came after Iran received a quadruple snub in their search for a high profile coach to lead them at the 1998 World Cup finals in France. Carlos Bilardo, who coached Argentina to the 1986 title, former Barcelona boss Johan Cruyff, Yugoslavian Bora Milutinovic, who took minnows Costa Rica to the last 16 in 1990 and was sacked by Mexico recently because of their poor manner of qualifying for the World Cup finals, and Portuguese coach Eduardo Vinga had all turned the job down. "Unfortunately the coaches we contacted did not want the job," said Daryush Mostafavi, President of the Iranian Football Federation. Mostafavi then tried to sign former Bulgarian coach Dimitar Penev, who took his side to the 1994 semi-finals, but that too fell through. On Saturday Mostafavi announced that Vierra would be retained and lead Iran to France.

Weather wipes out downhill

VAL GARDENA, Italy (AFP) — Fog and overnight rain wiped out Saturday's programme of two World Cup downhill races here, as weather continued to cause trouble on the skiing circuit. It was the second cancellation in as many days here in the Dolomites. Val Gardena was due to host a downhill on Friday, itself an event postponed from Val d'Isere, but fog prevented any racing despite a prolonged wait until mid-afternoon by the organisers. Officials subsequently took flak from the skiers, who had been made to wait around for two hours. To avoid a repeat performance on Saturday, officials decided to cancel everything first thing in the morning. Rain was also falling on the other side of the mountain, at Alta Badia, which is due to host a giant slalom on Sunday. That race, as of Saturday morning, was still on.

S. Africa coach resigns

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Clive Barker, coach of the South African national soccer team, announced his resignation soon after he arrived at Johannesburg airport from Saudi Arabia early Saturday. The SABA news agency reported. Despite qualification for next summer's world cup in France, his side's weaknesses were ruthlessly exposed in the Confederation Cup tournament hosted by the Saudis. They failed to progress beyond their group matches, which involved the Czech Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay. The South African team, known in the country as Bafana Bafana (The Boys), will now defend the African Nations Cup in Burkina Faso in February without Barker. They play hosts France, Denmark and Saudi Arabia in the World Cup four months later.

Fulham take the points

LONDON (AFP) — A headed goal from substitute Danny Cullip five minutes from the final whistle gave Fulham an undeserved 1-0 victory over Burnley after a drab clash at Craven Cottage Friday night. Cullip scored from a Robbie Herrera free kick and it was Fulham's only effort on target and many in a crowd of just 5,000 — the lowest home gate this season — had long since departed. Fulham were hooded off after a goalless first half and their victory scarcely disguised the shortcomings of a team which has been bolstered by six million pounds worth of new signings by manager Ray Wilkins and chief operating officer Kevin Keegan.

Asanovic set for Napoli

LONDON (AFP) — Derby's Croatian midfielder Aljosa Asanovic looks certain to sign for top Italian club Napoli this weekend. The 32-year-old flew out to Italy on Friday afternoon for talks and Derby announced that the clubs had agreed terms. The fee has yet to be revealed, but Napoli, who are bottom of Serie A, hope to have Asanovic in the

side for their League game on Sunday. Asanovic was one of Derby's stars last season following his £90,000 signing from Hajduk Split shortly before Euro '96. But he was injured at the start of this season and his chances have been limited to just five appearances by the ruling that allows clubs only three non-EEC players in their squad. Asanovic is desperate for regular first-team football to boost his chances of playing in the World Cup finals in France next year and now he looks set to get that with Napoli.

Anderton signs up for Spurs

LONDON (AFP) — Tottenham's Darren Anderton has signed a new one-year extension to his contract that will keep him at White Hart Lane until 2000. Anderton's career has been on hold for much of the past two seasons because of recurring injuries since playing in the European Championship semi-final for England against Germany in 1996. But the midfielder put pen to paper Friday to confirm to the Spurs faithful that his heart and playing future lie with the struggling north London club. Anderton, who is in the Spurs squad for the vital relegation clash with Barnsley this weekend, said: "There is no other team I want to play for, and that is why I agreed to sign the new contract."

Dugarry signs for Marseille

MARSEILLE (AFP) — French international striker Christophe Dugarry Friday signed a four-and-a-half year contract with Olympique Marseille. Dugarry will line-up alongside record signing Fabrizio Ravanelli in Marseille's championship-chasing side. Dugarry has failed to win a first-team place since his transfer to AC Milan, while Marseille recently signed Ravanelli from English side Middlesbrough for a record 50 million francs (\$8.7 million). Marseille are believed to have paid Milan 30 million francs for Dugarry. The former Bordeaux player will make his debut for his new club in a League Cup match against Chateauroux on January 4.

Laws pays damages to Bonetti

LONDON (AFP) — Former Grimsby Town forward Ivano Bonetti has accepted undisclosed damages from ex-Blundell Park manager Brian Laws and the club in settlement of his British High Court claim for assault. Italian Bonetti's cheekbone was broken by Laws in a dressing-room incident in February 1996, following Grimsby's 3-2 defeat by Luton Town. Laws admitted causing the injury but claimed he acted in self-defence and Bonetti had thrown a chicken at him. In addition to the payment, the settlement package included a personal letter of apology from Laws to Bonetti.

Cruyff going nowhere

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson on Friday insisted he wants Dutch misfit Jordi Cruyff to stay at Old Trafford. The Dutchman has made only a handful of appearances this season and has been linked with a move to Spanish club Deportivo La Coruna. Ferguson, though, claims no-one from Deportivo has contacted him and that Cruyff is still much part of his plans as United maintain their pursuit of trophies on three fronts. "We've not heard anything from Deportivo and I don't know anything about it," he said. Cruyff, 23, joined the champions from Barcelona in a £1.4 million (\$2.1 million) deal in the summer of 1996. His season has been blighted by an ankle injury and he is only just returning from an operation at the start of November.

Karembeu snubs Real Madrid

ROME (AFP) — Sampdoria's French international Christian Karembeu has apparently snubbed a move to Spanish giants Real Madrid. Sampdoria say the two clubs have agreed a deal but that Karembeu has decided it is not the right move for him. Sampa president Enrico Mantovani said: "We have accepted Real's conditions and Karembeu said they were the team he always dreamt of playing for, but now he has told us that he no longer wants to go there — it makes me laugh."

Tunisia to face Senegal, Austria

TUNIS (AFP) — England's World Cup opponents Tunisia have arranged warm-up matches with Senegal and Austria. They will meet fellow Africans Senegal in Dakar on January 7 and Austria in Vienna on May 27.

Silk Cut advances in Whitbread

SYDNEY (AFP) — British yacht Silk Cut was closing in on leader EF Language of Sweden during the third leg of the Whitbread Round The World Race Saturday. As the nine-boat fleet entered Bass Strait, around 1,200 kilometres from the Sydney finish early next week, EF Language, skippered by American Paul Cayard, was 10.7 km ahead of Silk Cut (Lawrie Smith), according to the 1800 GMT (Friday) reporting of positions. Silk Cut had sliced six kilometres off EF Language's lead overnight. In third position was Swedish Match, 11.5 kilometres astern of the leader with American entries, Toshiba and Chessie Racing fourth and fifth respectively. Organisers expect the shape of the race to become clearer when all the boats enter the Bass Strait, separating Australian southern states Victoria and Tasmania. They say it will then become apparent which routes have paid off. Speeds have picked up and the northerly westerly breeze is giving the fleet fast reaching conditions, with all yachts averaging between 11 to 12 knots. Of the leading bunch, Toshiba, Chessie Racing and Silk Cut are the most northerly positioned of the fleet. At 1800 GMT, EF Language had 1,194 kilometres to sail to the finish line of the third leg in Sydney.

Tomba 'La Bomba' gets skis ready

ALTA BADIA (AFP) — Alberto Tomba was getting his water skis ready on Saturday, as the Italian idol prepared for a rain-soaked weekend of World Cup slalom skiing.

Tomba is the star attraction in Sunday's giant here and Monday's slalom at Madonna di Campiglio. But like the other skiers, he also needs help from the weather gods who are currently ruining the World Cup calendar.

The rain which wrecked Saturday's downhill double hill at Val Gardena on the other side of the mountain, was also falling alarmingly at Alta Badia.

"If it continues to rain like this, we can take our water skis and ski down the valley," quipped Tomba. "They couldn't even go on the course this morning to test it."

Tomba, the second most successful World Cup skier

of all time, has a special affection for this Dolomite resort.

"I like it here," he said. "Remember, the first time I was ever on a podium was here in 1986."

Tomba, then in his first year on the circuit, was second in the giant slalom behind compatriot Richard Pramotton.

The triple world champion, who turned 31 on Friday, has also won here

four times, most recently in 1994.

"It's a very technical, challenging, course. But if we have it, I'd like it to be a fair race and not one like the women's race this morning."

The slalom won by Sweden's Ylva Nowen at Val d'Isere, and watched by Tomba on television here, was hit by a heavy snowfall during the second run.

Along the weather, Tomba faces two other formidable opponents in Sunday's fourth giant of the season — Austria's overall World Cup leader Hermann Maier and Switzerland's controversial winner at Val d'Isere, Michael Von Gruenigen.

Maier won at Park City and clocked the best time in France — only for the Swiss team to protest that he had broken the rules by lifting his ski up too soon after the finish line.

Maier was disqualified, handing victory to Von Gruenigen, who now leads the giant slalom standings after his earlier win at Tignes. The Swiss skier also won this race last year and was second in 1995.

But even if things don't go Tomba's way here, there is another chance at Madonna in his favourite discipline.

"Madonna is also a very technical course, a very difficult course," Tomba said. But he went on: "I want to give my fans a Christmas present and I think I'm in a position to do so."

Free of the back pain which has plagued his early season and now fully fit, Tomba added: "And if I don't won't be for Christmas, it will be for Epiphany."

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Knicks, win; Lakers beat Hawks

TORONTO (AP) — Damon Stoudamire scored a career-high 36 points Friday night as the Toronto Raptors ended a franchise record 11-game home losing streak with a 92-91 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

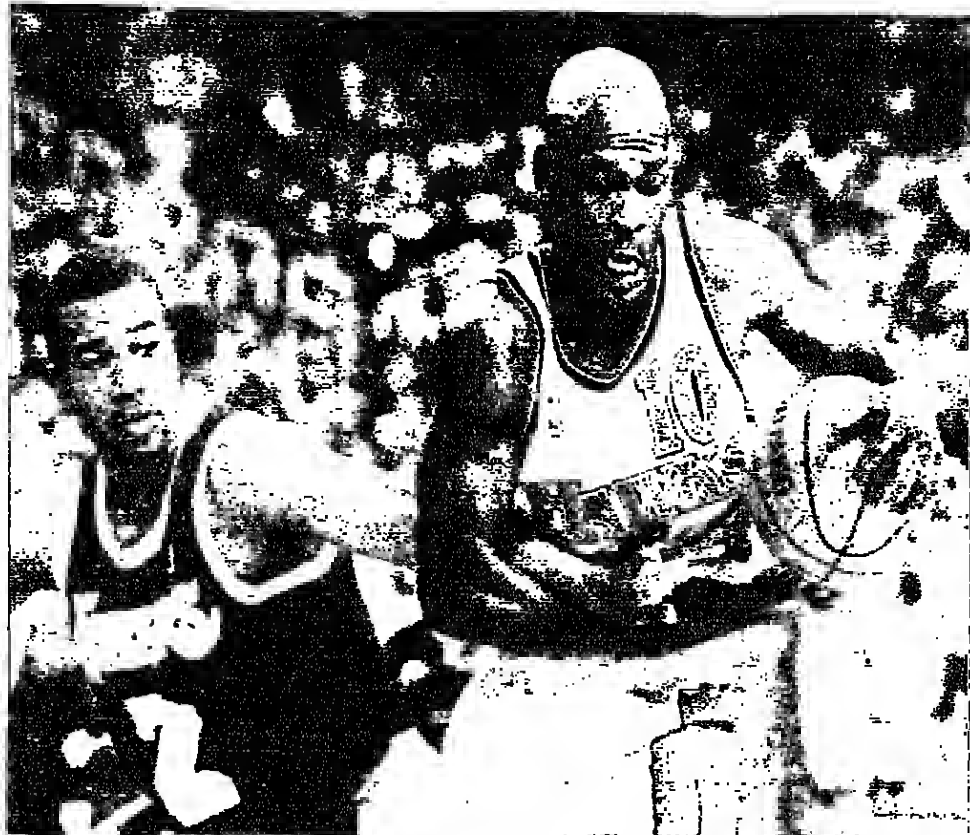
Stoudamire, who added eight assists and seven rebounds, brought one of the most vocal crowds of the season to their feet, hitting a 3-pointer to put the Raptors up 92-91 with 59.2 seconds to play.

Glenn Robinson had a chance to give the Bucks the lead back, but he couldn't get off a clean shot at the buzzer as the Bucks dropped their fifth in a row.

Wizards 106, Hornets 86: At Washington, with defence and hustle and Juwan Howard's 26 points, the Wizards improved to 7-0 at the MCI centre by snapping the Hornets' five-game winning streak.

The Wizards have now defeated a top team from each of the four divisions — Utah, Miami and Seattle were the others — and three of those games in Washington's new building were blowouts.

Pacers 98, Pistons 90: At Indianapolis, Indiana survived a 19-point fourth-quarter outburst and 33 points overall by Jerry Stackhouse in his Detroit debut as



Los Angeles Lakers' Derek Fisher (2) tries to sneak in a steal on Atlanta Hawks' Mookie Blaylock in Atlanta (Reuters photo)

the Pacers won their fifth straight.

Stackhouse, traded from the Philadelphia 76ers to the Pistons on Thursday in a four-player deal, topped his previous season-high by one point and almost single-handedly brought Detroit back from a late 19-point deficit.

Knicks 104, Cavaliers 77: At Cleveland, Patrick Ewing had 22 points and 10 rebounds, as New York snapped a six-game road losing streak.

The experienced Knicks humbled Cleveland, one of the league's promising young teams, and made Shawn Kemp, a non-factor. Kemp fouled out with 5 minutes left, contributing 10 points on 2-for-9 shooting and five rebounds.

Allan Houston had 13 points for New York, and John Starks came off the bench to score 13, including a 3-pointer at the half-time buzzer that seemed to set the tone for the second half.

Lakers 98, Hawks 96: At Atlanta, Elden Campbell scored eight of his 18 points in the final 6:55, leading Los Angeles to a victory that snapped the Hawks' four-game winning streak.

The Lakers handed the Hawks only their third home loss in 13 games before a crowd of 25,288 — second largest in the Georgia dome this season.

Kobe Bryant led the Lakers with 19 points, including a 3-point basket that broke an 81-all tie with 8:08 to play. Bryant also had two key steals in the final four minutes.

Steve Smith had 25 to lead the Hawks, who had a chance to force overtime. But Dikembe Mutombo missed two free throws with two seconds remaining.

Heat 91, 76ers 84: At Philadelphia, Tim Hardaway had 22 points and a season-high 14 assists as Miami heat broke a two-game losing streak. Voshon Lenard added 19 points for Miami, while Alonzo

Mourning, playing for just the second time this season, had 12 points and 13 rebounds.

Theo Ratliff, playing his first game for the 76ers after being acquired Thursday in a four-player trade with Detroit, had a season-high 17 points and seven rebounds. The game also marked the return of 76ers forward Derrick Coleman, who missed 13 games due to an irregular heart-beat.

Rockets 116, Kings 98: At Houston, Kevin Willis scored 28 points, including six straight late in the fourth quarter during a 20-7 run as Houston pulled away.

The victory was the 11th in the last 13 games for Houston and the ninth straight at home. The Kings lost on the road for the ninth consecutive time, making them 1-11 away from home this season.

Charles Barkley added 23 points and 16 rebounds and the Rockets had six players score in double figures.

Mitch Richmond topped the Kings with 24 points.

Nowen wins 1st World Cup race

VAL D'ISERE (AFP) — Sweden's Ylva Nowen won her first ever World Cup race when she took the women's slalom here on Saturday in a combined time of 1min 32.33secs.

Italy's Deborah Compagnoni, the defending world champion, was second in 1:32.42 with Urska Hrovat of Slovenia third in 1:32.81.

The 27-year-old Nowen, whose previous best finish had been fifth, finished 13th after the first run but with the piste starting to cut up, she made the most of her early start position in the second run.

"I made a huge blunder in the first run which dropped me so far back. The second run I treated like a downhill," said Nowen.

It was a brilliant performance by Nowen who was thinking of quitting the sport earlier this year.

"In the spring I was not sure whether or not I would continue competition skiing. I always skied well in training but could never put it together in competition. I am glad I decided to give it one final go," added the Swede.

Not so delighted was second placed Compagnoni.

"They should not have run the race. The way the piste broke up caused major problems for the faster runners. Still I finished second and got points which was important," explained Compagnoni.

Sweden's Pemilla



Germany's Hilde Gerg passes a gate during the women's World Cup slalom in Val d'Isere December 20. Gerg won the combined while Sweden's Ylva Nowen won the slalom (Reuters photo)

Wiberg, who has won 13 World Cup slalom's and led

after the first run, crashed out seconds after coming out of the start gate for her second run.

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PSG join Monaco in second place

PARIS (AFP) — Paris St Germain joined Monaco in second place behind new leaders Metz in the French first division standings Friday when they snatched a 2-1 victory at modest Rennes.

Metz had beaten Monaco 3-0 in the top-of-the-table clash 24-hours earlier.

Paris St Germain started strongly with Italian frontrunner Marco Simone creating three clear chances in as many minutes but then the visitors settled back.

It took goals from Eric Rabesandratana (44) and

Jimmy Algerino (81) to clinch the win — Rennes, currently second from bottom, unlucky not to earn a point after Nicolas Gousse scored on the hour.

Auxerre moved up to sixth spot with a thrilling 4-2 home win over high-riding Bordeaux.

Thomas Deniaud (16, 44) and the top league seprer Stephane Guivarch (58-pen, 85) were the Auxerre scorers while Bordeaux relied with goals from Marc Zanolli and a 63rd minute penalty from Jean-Pierre Papin.

Torrential rain on the Riviera forced the matches between Cannes and Chateauroux, and Marseille and Guingamp, to be postponed — while in Friday's other matches Bastia crashed 1-0 at home to Lyon after missing a second-half penalty. The Lyon goal came in the 55th minute from former international Daniel Bravo.

Lens come away 2-1 winners from Montpellier and Strasbourg defeated visiting Toulouse 2-0.

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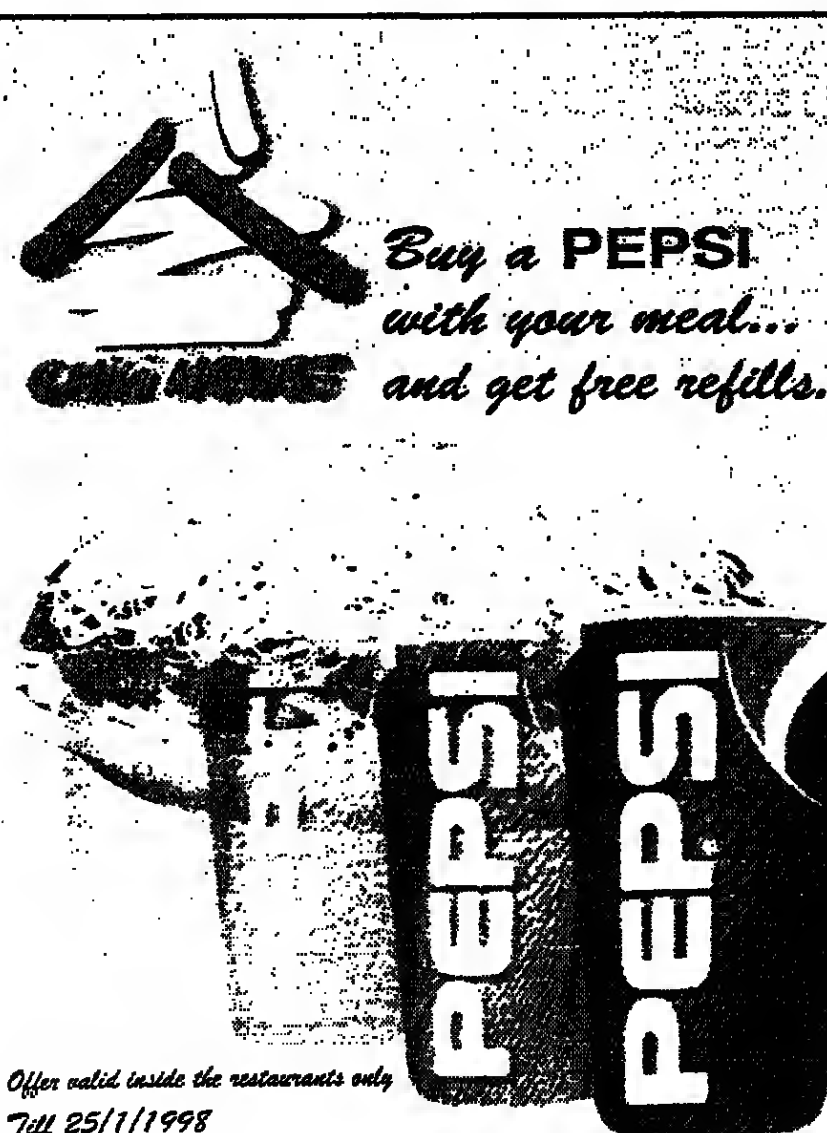
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U.S. gives Netanyahu more time to decide on withdrawal

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States has given Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu several more weeks to decide how big a withdrawal he can make on the West Bank, a senior U.S. official said Friday.

Washington does not expect Mr. Netanyahu or Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to take big decisions like that until after they meet U.S. President Bill Clinton in January, he said.

"It's logical that prior to taking tough decisions it would make sense to have the president see the two leaders. Each leader is going to have tough decisions to make," he said.

The U.S. has been pressing Mr. Netanyahu to make what it calls a "credible and significant" withdrawal from the West Bank. Mr. Netanyahu has problems inside his government, some members of which oppose giving land back to the Palestinians.

In an interview with Reuters Friday, Mr. Netanyahu ruled out an Israeli withdrawal until the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took tough action against political violence.

But neither he nor the U.S. have announced specific security targets for the Palestinians to meet.

U.S. Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright met Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat in Europe this week, without any visible signs of progress toward a further Israeli withdrawal.

The official said the U.S. mediators felt they were narrowing the gap between the two sides but he declined to give details. "We concluded the Hebron agreement on Jan. 15 and we haven't progressed since that time," he added later.

In the weeks before the meetings with Mr. Clinton, the United States will work on the so-called interim issues — mainly practical steps which Israel agreed to take in earlier agreements but then failed to

carry out.

They include opening an airport in Gaza, setting up an industrial zone between Israel and Gaza and making arrangements for a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank.

U.S. special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross may visit the region in the next few weeks to work on these questions, in the hope that progress here will improve the climate.

"They can affect the environment within which the decisions get made... we would like to be able to have some progress on the interim issues because it will facilitate on the bigger issues," the official said.

Iraqi oil to flow when U.N. plan approved — minister

CAIRO (R) — Iraq's oil minister said on Saturday his country would resume oil exports as soon as the United Nations approved plans to distribute food and medicine.

Lieutenant-General Amir Mohammad Rasheed told Reuters in an interview he expected the plan to be agreed and exports under the U.N. oil-for-food deal to be resumed within two weeks.

Mr. Rasheed, in Cairo for a meeting of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, said a distribution plan for Kurdish-held northern Iraq had already been drawn up.

The plan for the rest of Iraq would be completed in the next few days and submitted to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

"Once it is agreed we will immediately export oil. The whole process might take two weeks," he added.

Under the U.N. deal in operation since December 1996, Iraq may export oil worth \$2 billion every six months to finance imports of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods.

Mr. Rasheed said U.N. weapons inspectors were on a futile quest for prohibited arms and materials long since destroyed or abandoned, and demanded the immediate lifting of U.N. sanctions.

"The problem is like looking for a black cat in a dark room when there is no cat," he said of the work of the inspectors. "How do you look for something that is not existing?"

U.N. chief arms inspector Richard Butler said Friday he suspected some banned arms were hidden in Iraq's so-called presidential sites, from which Baghdad has barred inspectors.

"We have finally had evi-

dence or reason to believe that prohibited items have been or do exist in places that would be within that category called president and sovereign sites," he told a news conference at the U.N.

In response to Iraq's latest action, the Security Council is considering a U.S.-drafted statement demanding that Iraq give unconditional access to the inspectors immediately and condemning "any failure" by Iraq to admit them.

Mr. Rasheed said Iraq had worked with the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) to neutralise weapons and materials arising from its missile, nuclear, biological and chemical programmes, and long-term monitoring arrangements were in place.

"With the Special Commission we are doing professional work to prove to the UNSCOM that everything is really neutralised, either destroyed or abandoned," he said.

This work was complete with regard to missile and nuclear programmes and nearly complete concerning chemical weapons, "except the VX" chemical, Mr. Rasheed said.

He said Iraq was exploring with UNSCOM scientific means of establishing that it had no biological weapons to hide.

"So there is really nothing to look for. It is to check that there is nothing," he said.

Mr. Rasheed criticised Mr. Butler, without naming him, for voicing suspicions about what the presidential sites might contain.

"Some people in UNSCOM under pressure from the American administration for known political reasons, which have nothing to do with Security Council resolution 687, want to divert this issue

and make an issue of something which has nothing to do with the Security Council resolution," he said.

Mr. Rasheed said the conflict about the presidential sites was "really a pretext to delay the lifting of the sanctions, to delay the closing of the files and possibly also to give an excuse for military aggression by the Americans."

This was harming the reputation of American policy in the Middle East and was not in the interest of the American people.

He said Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz had taken foreign journalists on a tour of some presidential palaces in Baghdad Friday to "show them the facts of the situation and undermine any ambiguity the American administration would like to raise."

Mr. Butler said Iraq's definition of presidential and sovereign sites went well beyond those seen by journalists on Friday, to include anywhere President Saddam Hussein resided or worked.

Mr. Rasheed said Iraq had met Security Council terms for the lifting of sanctions imposed for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and demanded an end to the "agony of the Iraqi population." Iraq could rapidly return to full oil production once sanctions were ended, Mr. Rasheed said.

"Tomorrow morning we could produce 2.6 million barrels per day. In a couple of months we can produce, after we get a few million dollars, 3.0 million bpd. Within less than one year we can produce 3.5 million," he said.

He said 700,000 to one million bpd would be needed for local consumption and exports to Jordan. The remainder would be available for sale on the world market.

Egypt slaps entry visa requirement on visiting Qataris

DOHA (AFP) — Qataris visiting Egypt will require entry visas from Sunday, Egypt's ambassador here said on Saturday, the latest development in a diplomatic squabble between the two countries.

Mohammad Menissi described the move by Egypt's foreign ministry as "a question of sovereignty."

Cairo's decision follows a move by Doha in October to stop granting visas to nationals from seven Arab countries, including Egypt. Qatar said the move formed part of security measures for the controversial regional economic conference in Doha in November.

Relations between the two countries have been hit by Qatar's decision to host the economic forum which was attended by Israel despite an Egyptian-led boycott by many Arab countries.

In addition, the Qatari foreign minister sparked anger in Cairo over accusations Egypt was involved in a failed coup attempt in Doha in February 1996.

However, the two countries appeared to have patched up their differences at a reconciliation meeting earlier this month.

Mr. Menissi said that in November last year Qatar stopped granting work visas to Egyptian nationals, estimating that around 20,000 to 25,000 Egyptians currently live in Qatar against 40,000 two years ago.

Turkey expels Greek colonel for 'spying'

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has expelled a Greek military attaché after accusing him of spying and collaborating with Kurdish separatists, the Turkish mass-circulation daily Sabah reported Sunday.

The paper said that the Greek colonel, who worked as military attaché at the Greek consulate in Istanbul, was caught red-handed by Turkish intelligence agents as he received "confidential documents" in an Istanbul hotel.

But the Greek embassy in Ankara denied the report. "It is totally baseless," said spokesman Nicos Papaconstantinou.

According to Sabah, Turkish intelligence discovered links between the colonel, identified only by his surname Haralambous, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is fighting for an independent homeland in southeast Turkey.

It said he had PKK activists photograph Turkish military

installations, helped to sneak Kurdish rebels back into the country after training in Greece and "gave them military support."

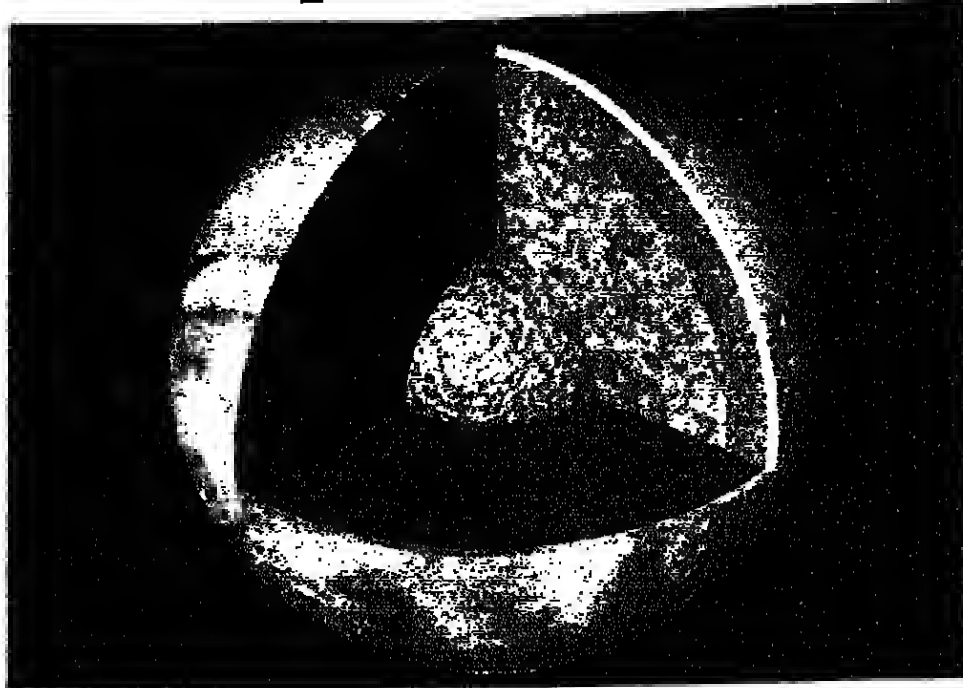
The intelligence services set a trap for the officer before arresting him and his contacts in Istanbul. He was then thrown out of the country, Sabah said without giving a date for the expulsions.

The paper published a photograph of a man in military uniform whom it said was Colonel Haralambous.

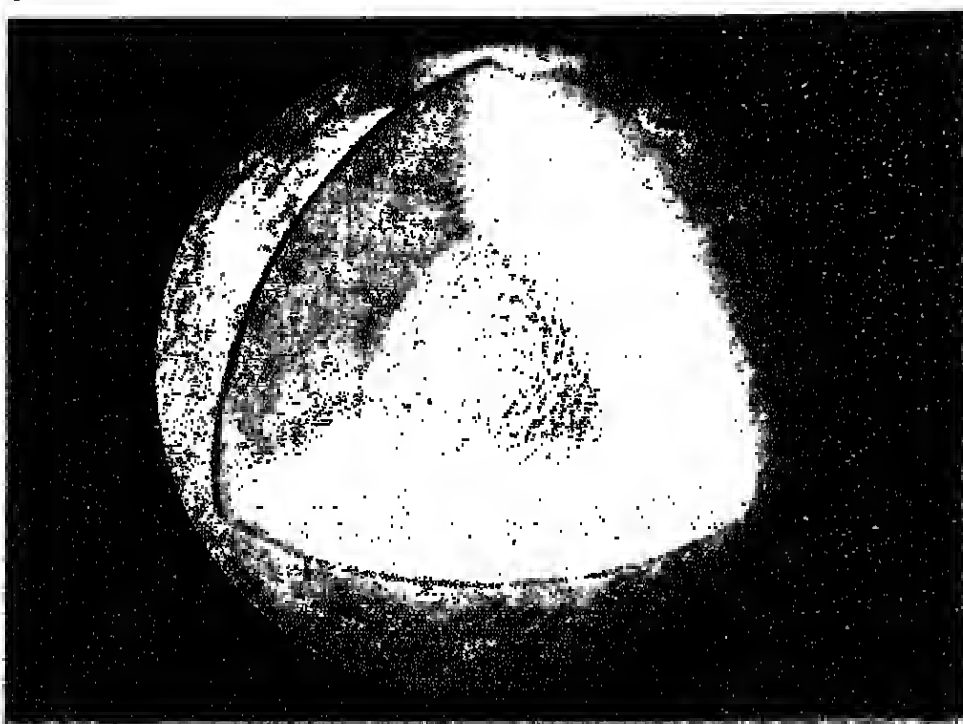
The Greek embassy said the picture was in fact of its own military attaché in Ankara, Constantin Balanos. "As far as I know there is no-one called Haralambous, it's bogus," the embassy spokesman said.

Turkey has repeatedly accused its arch-enemy Greece of training PKK militants to attack Turkish targets, something which Athens denies.

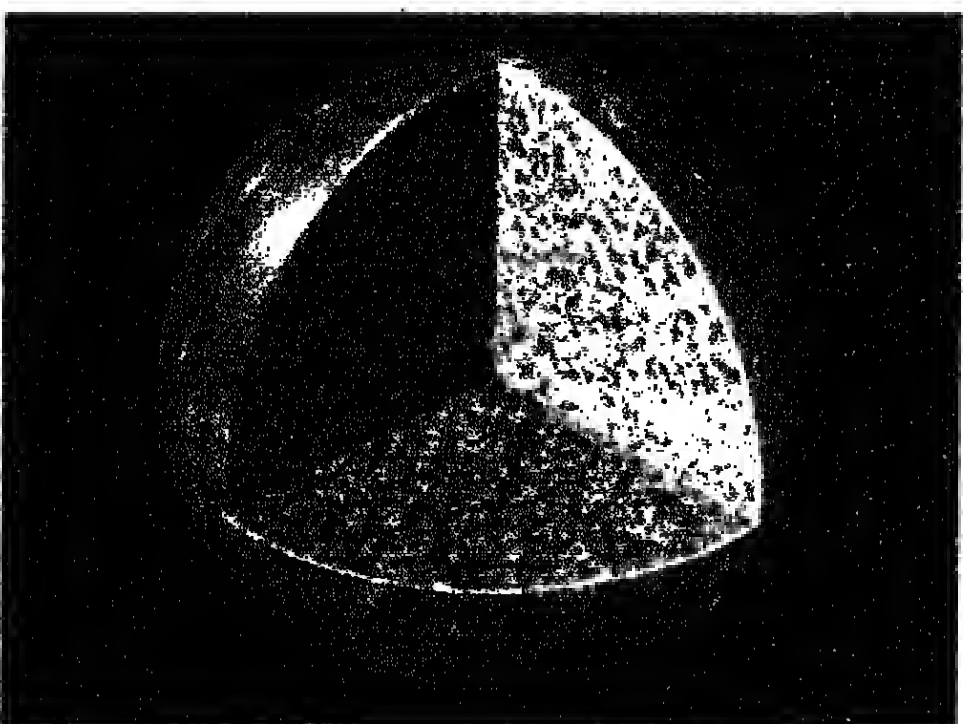
Jupiter's moons



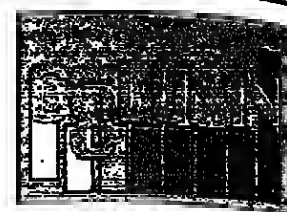
This image released by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Dec. 16 shows a cutaway view of the possible internal structure of Jupiter's moon Europa. The interior characteristics are inferred from gravity field and magnetic field measurements by NASA's Galileo spacecraft. Europa has a metallic (iron, nickel) core (shown in gray) surrounded by a rock shell (shown in brown). The rock layer is in turn surrounded by a shell of water in ice or liquid form (shown in blue and white). The surface layer of Europa is shown as white to indicate that it may differ from the underlying layers. Galileo images of Europa suggest that a liquid water ocean might underlie a surface ice layer several miles thick (AFP photo)



This image released by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Dec. 16 shows a cutaway view of the possible internal structure of Jupiter's moon Io. The surface of the satellite is a mosaic of images obtained in 1979 by NASA's Voyager spacecraft. The interior characteristics are inferred from gravity field and magnetic field measurements by NASA's Galileo spacecraft. Io's radius is about 1129 miles, similar to that of Earth's Moon. Io has a metallic (iron, nickel) core (shown in gray) drawn to the correct relative size. The core is surrounded by a rock shell (shown in brown) (AFP photo)



This image shows a cutaway view of the possible internal structure of Jupiter's moon Callisto. Callisto's interior is shown as a relatively uniform mixture of comparable amounts of ice and rock. The surface layer of Callisto is shown as white to indicate that it may differ from the underlying layer (AFP photo)



British doctor reveals secret code for insulting patients

LONDON (AFP) — Patients in Britain who find their medical notes covered with incomprehensible acronyms may be being secretly insulted, a doctor revealed on Friday. Phil Hammond said in an interview that many doctors use a common code to poke fun at their patients. Patients with "SIG" at the top of their medical notes have been marked as a "Stroppy Ignorant Git." Other acronyms include "TATT" for "Tired All The Time," "TEETH" for "Tried Everything Else," "Try Homeopathy," "PAFO" for "Pissed (drunk) And Fell Over" and "TF BUNNY" for "Totally — But Unfortunately Not Dead Yet."

BBC to screen documentary on male hooker

LONDON (AFP) — The BBC is to screen a documentary about a happily-married male prostitute in Australia who has been paid to sleep with 1,200 women. Joel Ryan, a father of four sleeps with 500 women annually, and earns \$134,000 a year as a legalised sex worker — on call 24 hours a day. In the documentary "What sort of a gentleman are you after?" Joel reveals how he turned to prostitution when his furniture-making business hit hard times. Joel is often hired as a birthday present and as a special gift to the bride-to-be at hen parties. He says sleeping with other women is never like making love to his wife, it's just sex. "I'm being ordered up like a pizza," he says.

Indian director charged with train hold-up

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Bombay film-maker who held up an Express train in the Indian state of Rajasthan to shoot a film appeared in court Saturday, the President of India said. A magistrate stayed the arrest of Tinnu Verma, the film-maker, and granted him bail, but ordered other actors and actresses to appear in his court next month to face trial. Verma's unit from Bombay, the hub of India's film industry, allegedly stopped the train recently in a Rajasthan rail station to shoot an action-thriller in its passenger cars.

Truant senator stripped of privileges

OTTAWA (AFP) — A Canadian senator has been stripped of his privileges — office, secretary, telephone and free travel within Canada — because of his failure to attend sessions of the Upper House. However, Liberal Senator Andrew Thompson, 73, who has been fewer than three per cent of the chamber's sessions since 1990, will keep his annual salary of \$52,500. Thompson said he was too ill to attend Senate sessions over the last seven years. He spends much of the year at his home in La Paz, Mexico, providing medical documents to explain his absence and keep the pay cheque flowing.

Bill Crystal will host the 70th Academy Awards

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Comedian Billy Crystal will return to host the 70th Academy Awards, an academy official announced Friday. "I am delighted that Billy is returning as host this year; there is nobody like him," said Gil Cates, producer of the Academy Awards. "Billy's performance last year was spectacular; the audience loved him."

Iran to appoint new envoy to Germany

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran is to appoint a new ambassador to Germany following a thaw in relations, which were strained over German charges that Iranian leaders were involved in terrorism, a newspaper said Saturday.

Former deputy foreign minister Ahmad Azizi will replace Iran's current envoy Hossein Musavian who has been in the job for seven years, the English-language Iran News

said, without giving a date for the handover.

Mr. Azizi, 54, is now head of the foreign affairs committee of the National Security Council, Iran's highest political and military decision-making body.

The nomination of a new ambassador could be welcomed by Germany as Mr. Musavian was at the helm of the Iranian mission in Bonn through the darkest period of

bilateral relations.

Relations soured after a Berlin court in April accused Tehran of involvement in the murder of dissidents on German soil in 1992. Germany along with other European Union countries recalled their ambassadors.

The EU diplomats finally returned last month after Iran dropped a demand for the German ambassador to be the last to return and alone.

U.S. prepares for Lockerbie anniversary

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Washington vowed Friday "we shall not forget" as it prepared to mark the anniversary of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie.

Scotland that left 270 dead, including 189 Americans. Families and friends of the victims were to gather at Arlington Cemetery, just outside Washington, and in Lockerbie Sunday to mark

the anniversary.

The State Department described the Dec. 21, 1988 bombing as "one of the worst terrorist attacks in the history of our country."

"We have not forgotten this terrible crime committed that day nine years ago, and we shall not forget," State Department deputy spokesman James Foley said.

"We will continue to demand that the two men accused of this crime be held to answer so that the truth may be known, and we pledge our continuing commitment to see that justice is done," he said.

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